Interview with James R. Bullington

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JAMES R. BULLINGTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is July 31st, 2001. This is an interview with James R. Bullington. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Jim?

BULLINGTON: Jim, yes.

Q: All right, let's start at the beginning if you could tell me wheand where you were born and something about your family.

BULLINGTON: I was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1940. My daddy was a welder for TVA, the Tennessee Valley Authority, building some of the TVA dams that were going up in the Depression era. He followed construction work for most of his life, mostly with TVA. We moved around a good bit while I was young, following the construction of the various projects he was on. We lived in North Alabama and Florida and California, but eventually moved back to Chattanooga when I was in the sixth grade.

Q: You have what I would consider a Southern accent.

BULLINGTON: Well, I hope so. (laughter) It becomes even mormellifluous after about three beers.

Q: Tell me, what's your father's family background?

BULLINGTON: One of my relatives did genealogical research, and wrote a book. According to her the first Bullington came to Jamestown some time before 1624. He wasn't with the first group, in 1607, but the first census she was able to find listed this fellow, Nicholas Bullington, in Jamestown in 1624. The Bullingtons migrated west from there, and eventually got to North Alabama, to farms near Athens, where my daddy's from. It appears there weren't any publicly distinguished folks in the family background. They were mostly farmers. Some fought in the Revolution and the Civil War.

Q: Well, your father, did he grow up on a farm?

BULLINGTON: Yes, he grew up on a farm, and in fact we lived on my granddaddy's farm in Athens a couple of years when I was in the third and fourth grade.

Q: Did he get through high school?

BULLINGTON: Yes, he got through high school...

Q: That was quite an achievement in those days.

BULLINGTON: Yes, that was probably well above average in North Alabama. But as far as I know I'm the first one in my immediate family to go to college.

Q: How about your mother? What were some of the antecedents...

BULLINGTON: Her antecedents were also in Virginia. They traced the family back to Governor West, in the Colonial era, for whom West Point in the peninsula area is named. They migrated into the Smoky Mountains region and were pretty much North Carolina,

East Tennessee hillbillies. Mother's grandfather, Jerome Napoleon West, came down from the hills to live in Chattanooga in the late 19th Century. That's where my mother and father met, when daddy was working on Chickamauga dam.

Q: Ah yes. Did your mother go to a school or a high school or...?

BULLINGTON: She went to high school for two or three years, but shdidn't graduate.

Q: Well, really the first place I guess you remember quite well iChattanooga.

BULLINGTON: Yes, I remember going to the first grade there, then we moved around and were in California and on the farm in North Alabama for a few years. We moved back to Chattanooga when I was in sixth grade, and I stayed there until I left for college.

Q: What was Chattanooga like in those days?

BULLINGTON: H.L. Mencken described it when he came there to cover the Scopes “monkey trial,” which was in the small nearby town of Dayton. There weren't any hotels in Dayton, so all the journalists lived in Chattanooga. In one of his pieces for the Baltimore Sun, Mencken called Chattanooga the “buckle on the bible belt.” It was a grimy industrial town, very polluted, still very much influenced by the War.

Q: The War.

BULLINGTON: The War.

Q: My grandfather charged up Missionary Ridge, by the way.

BULLINGTON: Oh, did he? With Arthur McArthur?

Q: No, he was with the 26th Wisconsin regiment, was a captain, think. Came over with Hooker's Corp.

BULLINGTON: Oh, yes. Well, my folks first lived in North Chattanooga, north of the Tennessee River, but later moved to very near Missionary Ridge. When I would go back to visit I often walked along the crest of the ridge, where they have all the markers, and relived some of the Battle of Missionary Ridge. Chattanooga was a medium sized town. At that time there were only two big high schools in the city of Chattanooga, but they were very big. My graduating class had six, seven hundred students.

Q: Good heavens, that's big.

BULLINGTON: That's because there were only two in the whole city.

Q: Instead of a sort of elementary school, what subjectparticularly interested you?

BULLINGTON: I don't know that I had any favorite subjects that early. By the time I got to junior high school and high school, I liked to read a lot, mostly fiction: Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Victor Hugo.

Q: Classics like that. In high school, did you play sports or otheextracurricular activities?

BULLINGTON: No, I wasn't very athletic to begin with, and then in 1952 I had polio. This was the year before the Salk vaccine came out, and polio was really a scourge at that time. A lot of people got it. I got it the summer between junior high school and high school. It left my leg affected, though not really badly. I could walk well, I even jogged a lot for many years, but it was bad enough that I couldn't be competitive in athletics.

Q: In high school, did you get involved in any drama, music, anything of that nature?

BULLINGTON: Not very much, to tell the truth. I was not an outstanding student. I had good grades, but they came very easy. I never paid much attention to studying because I didn't have to. I could make B's without studying, so I didn't. Couldn't go all the way to make A's. I was a little bit active in student politics, ran for office once but didn't win. Didn't

really get too much involved in that. One thing I did get involved in was ham radio. That was one of the first things that got me interested in the Foreign Service, the first time I knew there was such a thing as an embassy.

Q: So you know, being in Chattanooga is sort of in a heartland city. The buckle on the Bible belt. Did the outside world intrude much?

BULLINGTON: No. I don't think we even had a Chinese restaurant in the town at the time. It was a very limited horizon. There weren't any foreigners there; there weren't any international businesses. It was very insular.

Q: With the ham radio, how did you hear of it, what got you to knoabout it? Embassies and Foreign Service and all that.

BULLINGTON: One of the things you try to do in ham radio, or a lot of people do anyway, is to talk to other hams in as many different countries as possible. At that time, it was still exciting to be able to talk to the other side of the world from your own “ham shack.” Some of the people that I talked to overseas were associated with AID and embassies and the military. It did serve to broaden the horizon of a small town hick like me in Chattanooga. It made me realize that there was a big wide world out there that I didn't know very much about, and I decided I wanted to learn more.

Q: How about your home? Was your mother and father, did you havbrothers, by the way?

BULLINGTON: I only have one brother, who is eleven years younger. As kids we weren't very close, because by the time he got old enough to talk to, I was off to college.

Q: I was just wondering, did you ever, I mean was it sort of the dinner table place people got together and talked about what was happening?

BULLINGTON: Not much. Dinner conversation was mostly about affairs of the family and what was going on with the neighbors and things like that. Maybe about church. There was no discussion of international politics or intellectual matters.

Q: Does your family, were they democratic, republican, or noparticularly...?

BULLINGTON: Southern Democrats, for the most part, but they weren't politically engaged in any major way. That was the era of the “solid South,” and the only meaningful election was the Democratic Party primary. Daddy was a union member, but not politically active.

Q: Well then, you were ready to graduate at about 1958, was it?

BULLINGTON: I graduated from high school in 1957. I graduated when I was 16 because I started school a year early and then skipped a grade in elementary school. So I was quite young when I went off to college.

Q: Well, when you were in high school, how did the family feel abouyou going to college?

BULLINGTON: Oh, they were all for it. They certainly were for education and going to college, and they wanted me to do something other than manual labor like my father had done. Q: Where did you go? What were you pointed toward?

BULLINGTON: I was pointed towards engineering. The first satellite, Sputnik, was launched in 1957, and everybody was excited about engineering at that time. I was pretty good in math and science and some of my high school teachers encouraged me to go in that direction. Actually, one of the interesting things about that era was the quality of the public schools, especially the high school I attended in Chattanooga. It was good, it was really good. There were private schools there that were perhaps better, but in Chattanooga City High School we even had calculus. The English courses were rigorous and the teachers knew their stuff. They were mostly older women, since at that time teaching was considered mainly a woman's profession. I got an excellent high school education.

That became evident when I went to Auburn and was academically ahead of most of my freshman class.

Q: Why Auburn?

BULLINGTON: I didn't have money to go to college and the family didn't have money to pay for it. There was what was called a “co-op program” in many engineering schools in the South, where you would work for a semester and go to school for a semester. A company and the school would usually arrange for a partner who would be on the opposite schedule, to work when you were in school, and you would work when he was in school. Auburn used a quarter system, rather than semesters, so you worked a quarter and went to school a quarter. I managed to get a job with a Chattanooga company called Tennessee Products and Chemical Corporation. They made industrial chemicals. So I went to college to become a chemical engineer, starting in the fall of 1957 and coming backto work for a quarter and then going back to school in the spring.

Q: Tell me a little bit about Auburn. What was sort of the background, how was student life during the '50s?

BULLINGTON: Oh it was a lot of fun. One reason I went to Auburn was because it was cheap, even though I had to pay out-of-state tuition; so with the income from my co-op job, I even had a little left over to party with.

Q: Is it private?

BULLINGTON: Not at all. It's the Land Grant University of the state of Alabama. The tuition was seventy-five dollars a quarter, for out-of-state students, and even less for those from Alabama. The cost of living in Auburn was very low. Also, Auburn had more flexibility in their co-op program than some of the other schools I checked out, and they seemed to be more interested in having me come there. I was a semifinalist on the National Merit Scholarship exam, and they went out of their way to be nice and recruit me. So that's why

I ended up in Auburn. I joined a fraternity there, Sigma Pi, and had a great time. Lots of fun football weekends, and of course Auburn's a huge football school. We won the national championship my freshman year.

Q: I would have thought that being so in and out, you know, did yoend up with an 8- year program?

BULLINGTON: No, it would have been a six-year program had I stayed a co-op student. But after three years of the co-op program I had pretty well decided that I didn't want to be an engineer. This was mainly because of the experience working in the chemical plant, seeing what engineers did. I didn't find that to be particularly interesting.

Q: What do they do? What does a...

BULLINGTON: In this case mainly supervise the production of chemicals. It just didn't hold much fascination. At the same time I got interested in journalism, because beginning in my freshman year I went to work for the Plainsman, which is the student newspaper at Auburn. I was first a sports reporter, and eventually worked my way up through the hierarchy and became editor of the paper my senior year. So my interest in journalism plus the fact that I did exceptionally well in my English courses and liked to write led me to change from engineering to an English major after my sophomore year. After that, I managed to go to school for the full academic year, by holding a part-time job at the Auburn publicity office and working at the Chattanooga Times during the summer.

Q: When did you graduate?

BULLINGTON: I graduated in '62. Started in '57 and graduated in '62.

Q: While you were doing that did sort of the outside world intrude much or, you know I mean we were having the Cuban missile crisis and, well that was after you graduated.

BULLINGTON: We also had the Bay of Pigs.

Q: Bay of Pigs. Well, you know the cold war was running hot. Dithat...?

BULLINGTON: I developed some interest in international affairs in high school and regularly read either Time or Newsweek or both, so, yes, I was more and more interested in what was going on in the external world. This interest increased as I became involved in journalism. I was able to quit co-oping because I got a part-time job working for the school news bureau, the publicity office of the university. From doing that I got picked up as a stringer for the Montgomery Advertiser and the Columbus Georgia Ledger Inquirer and wrote some stories for them about what was going on at Auburn. This experience helped me get a summer job as a reporter and copy editor for the Chattanooga Times. All of this together really opened up the external world a lot. Moreover, becoming editor of the Plainsman was truly a seminal experience, and wonderful training for the Foreign Service, first of all because of the writing, but also because of a particular challenge there that was very character building, I think. This was the era of desegregation in the South. In 1961 when I became editor, we were having the “freedom rides” coming through Alabama. People would get on the interstate buses and come down south to try to integrate the Greyhound bus stations. Up until that time I had never really thought much about the whole issue of segregation. I just took it for granted, as the way things were and had always been. Now that I had become editor of the school paper I felt some responsibility to think about it and comment on it, especially because of what happened to the freedom riders when they came to Alabama. People in Birmingham pulled them off the buses and the cops, rather than protect them, egged on the crowd. The same thing happened in Montgomery. This was major news all around the country. I felt like I should say something about it. So I wrote a front-page editorial, after I'd been editor maybe three weeks. The editorial said that what Alabama was doing to the freedom riders was wrong, that the people of Alabama were wrong, and not only that, the whole premise on which they were acting, the system of segregation, was wrong, and Auburn ought to be forthwith

desegregated. I gave 'em hell; I really gave 'em hell. This was met with great shock throughout the community. It was the first time that any major state university newspaper editor in the Deep South had publicly advocated desegregation. The Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on the front lawn of my fraternity house, where I was living; the president of the university called me in and gave me all sorts of unshirted hell; the student body gave me hell; most of the faculty gave me hell (although I had a few friends on the faculty); I was called a damn Yankee agitator who ought to go back up north to Chattanooga where I came from. (laughter) They called me a Bolshevik, among other nasty names. That was a pretty heady experience for a twenty-one year old kid. And it got into the state legislature, where they had a “committee on un- Alabama activities,” believe it or not, which threatened to cut off Auburn's appropriations unless the school administration did something about that editor of the school paper who was writing all this inflammatory trash. The Governor also got upset. This was John Patterson, to whom George Wallace lost in his first campaign, because as George Wallace famously said, “He outniggered me.” George said 'I'll never let that happen again.' And he didn't. So Governor Patterson also got on my case with some negative comments. The Associated Press sent out a story about all this nationwide, and the story was in the New York Times and the Washington Post. The American Association of University Professors also got involved. They sent a message to the university saying 'You better not do anything to this noble young editor of the school paper there.' So I kind of dared the administration to throw me out of school, and I'm sure they wanted to, but they didn't.

Q: How did your fraternity react to this?

BULLINGTON: Most disagreed strongly with my position, but they tolerated me. Very few agreed with what I was saying, but many supported my right to say it.

Q: Had you had enough contact with African Americans?

BULLINGTON: No. None whatsoever. It was a totally segregated society that I grew up in. There were certainly none at Auburn, none in the high schools in Chattanooga or anywhere else in the South. Like most white southerners at the time, I had no social contact with African Americans.

Q: John...

BULLINGTON: Nearly twenty years later, in 1979, the State Department had sent me to the Army War College for training. At the end of each year of training the Army invites a group of distinguished citizens to come to Carlisle Barracks to show off the class and lobby for more appropriations for the Army. The year I graduated, among this group of distinguished citizens was John Patterson, former governor of Alabama, then a lawyer practicing in Montgomery. They had a reception, a sort of mixer for the students and VIPs. I had seen his name on the guest list, so I walked up to him and said “Governor, I'm sure you don't remember me, but when you were Governor of Alabama, I was editor of the Plainsman over there at Auburn.” He immediately drew back and pointed his finger at my chest and said, “So YOU'RE the son of a bitch that wrote that editorial!” (laughter) I was proud to say, “Yes, I was the son of a bitch that wrote that editorial.” I was so pleased that it had bothered him all those years.

Q: You know, sometimes you do something like that and it begins ttake over your life.

BULLINGTON: Oh, indeed yes, absolutely. From that time on I was notorious on the campus as the “integrationist editor” of the paper. The university administration was watching me and calling me in for warnings and the students were harassing me.

Q: Were any of the outfits, you know freedom riders who, SoutherBaptist kind of folks.

BULLINGTON: The Southern Christian Leadership Council, Martin LutheKing's organization.

Q: Southern Christian leadership. Were they making contact with yoor were you sort of off to one side?

BULLINGTON: They really didn't make contact. I was doing my thing pretty much independently. Later on after I graduated I got in contact with them to some extent. My first tour was in the Department in Washington beginning in 1963, the year of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. I participated in that. An Auburn buddy and I carried a sign saying 'Alabamans for civil rights.' People looked at us with some skepticism. But I was there in the crowd when Martin Luther King made his 'I have a dream' speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

Q: Well, you graduated; did you have any problem on the academiside from your professors?

BULLINGTON: No. At least some of the professors were of a liberal persuasion, and thought what I did was pretty good. Much less than half, but some of them. I didn't have any academic problems.

Q: How about the ladies, the co-eds of the University of Auburn?

BULLINGTON: They were mostly Southern Belles. To the extent thehad any intellectual aspirations, they were mostly against me.

Q: As an English major, what did you perceive yourself pointetowards?

BULLINGTON: I wasn't too sure when I first became an English major. I remember one of my teachers who said I should be an English professor. He thought to encourage me in this direction by giving me some assignments to do in PMLA, Proceedings of the Modern Language Association. I found that so deadly dull I decided I didn't want anything to do with a profession that highly valued the production of such drivel. About halfway through my junior year I began to aim specifically toward the Foreign Service.

Q: Could you find out anything much about it when you were in Auburn?

BULLINGTON: I wrote to the State Department and got the exam booklet, and I subscribed to the Foreign Service Journal. But there wasn't anyone at Auburn who really knew much about the Foreign Service. However there was one person who was a big help to me. We had a student-run activity called the Auburn Conference on International Affairs, which I had been involved with before I became Plainsman editor. Through that we had Ambassador Clare Timberlake come to Auburn. He had been in the Congo. At this time he was the State Department representative at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, the Air War College. My senior year, when I had signed up to take the Foreign Service exam, he invited me to come and see him in Montgomery. He was very encouraging and in fact wrote a letter of recommendation that was useful when I got to the oral. He was the first and only Foreign Service Officer I'd ever laid eyes on at that time.

Q: Did you take the exam while you were still in the college?

BULLINGTON: I took the exam in my senior year. Came up to Washington, first time I'd ever been on an airplane. Went to Atlanta on the train, got on an airplane and flew to Washington.

Q: Was that the written exam?

BULLINGTON: No, that was the oral. I took the written exam iMontgomery.

Q: How did the oral exam go? Do you recall any of the questions?

BULLINGTON: The one I recall most vividly, was if I thought we should open an Embassy in Ulaanbaatar. On the way to Washington on that Delta flight from Atlanta, I'd picked up National Geographic and read an article by Mr. Justice Douglas on Mongolia. Had that not been the case, I wouldn't have had the foggiest notion where Ulaanbaatar was, much less

whether we ought to have an Embassy there. Because I had read the article I was able to answer the question with some reasonableness.

Q: It was at that time sort of one of those issues that was floatinaround.

BULLINGTON: It was in the Sino-Soviet context.

Q: Did you get at all involved, in the cold war and the communists versus the west, did they intrude at all in what you were up to, I mean your studies and conversations.

BULLINGTON: It was just a given part of the background. It waalways there.

Q: I don't imagine there was a young Communists league in Auburn.

BULLINGTON: Oh no. (laughter) No, nothing like that. Auburn is about as conservative a place as you can get, not to say reactionary. It's the land grant university of the state of Alabama. It trains mostly farmers and engineers and veterinarians, that sort of school, although they did have a pretty good English department. The great rival is the University of Alabama, where the doctors and lawyers and most liberal arts students are trained. It's a cultural clash within the state of Alabama, and that annual football game is really something. You've gotta be either Auburn or you're Alabama, never the twain shall meet. Families are split over the issue. Few things are more important than football in Alabama.

Q: What about, you graduated what year now?

BULLINGTON: I graduated in December of '62. I had passed the oral that spring. I had one more quarter, the fall quarter, to complete my degree. I came into the Foreign Service in December of '62, right after Christmas.

Q: Did you come in with a class?

BULLINGTON: Yes, it was a fairly small class, I think sixteen.

Q: What were its members like, as a basic officer corps.

BULLINGTON: That was still the era when there was some validity to the notion of the Foreign Service as an Ivy League, East Coast establishment. I don't remember the exact figure but I think two-thirds of my colleagues were Harvard, Yale, or Princeton. The Service was already talking about the need for greater diversity, so I think I was the token hillbilly in that class.

Q: Did you play that to the hilt?

BULLINGTON: To some extent. I was also the youngest in the class. was just 22.

Q: Did you have any idea at the time whither you wanted to go anwhat you wanted to do?

BULLINGTON: No strong idea, no. I didn't have any real geographic preference. I liked the political cone because I had always been interested in history.

Q: So what did they do after you, what was your first assignment?

BULLINGTON: First, they sent me to FSI to study French, because at that time you had to get a three-three exam score in at least one language before you could be promoted. So I had sixteen weeks of French and I was able to get the three-three. Then they assigned me to NEA, the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. I was the Assistant Desk Officer for CENTO, the Central Treaty Organization, in the Bureau. That was my first tour of duty.

Q: You did that what through '60...

BULLINGTON: That would have been '63 to '65.

Q: CENTO, trying to think.

BULLINGTON: The Baghdad Pact.

Q: I was just going to say, the Baghdad Pact went down the tubes i'58.

BULLINGTON: It changed. Iraq pulled out, and what was left became the Central Treaty Organization with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, plus the U.S. and UK.

Q: What sort of things were you doing?

BULLINGTON: As with most international organizations there were committees and lots of meetings and preparations for those meetings. We wrote position papers and briefing books for the senior level participants. Parts of the work were fascinating. I got to go to the Ministerial Council meeting in Tehran with Dean Rusk. To ride on the Secretary's airplane, meet Dean Rusk and be part of the delegation, that was a real thrill for a young officer.

Q: Doing this, did you get much of a feel for how CENTO played iour international concerns? Was this pretty peripheral by this time?

BULLINGTON: It was increasingly marginal, yes. It was part of the John Foster Dulles construct that some called pact-o-mania. With CENTO and SEATO, the object was to contain Communism in the Middle East and Asia the way NATO contained it in Europe. But of course those countries were of a different order militarily and otherwise as compared to NATO countries. I don't think it ever worked too well, and by the early '60s it was pretty marginalized.

Q: Where did the Middle Eastern Bureau, I would assume at that time, as always, meant it's whole effort was much more concentrated on Arab-Israeli matters and all that, did you sort of feel a bit like stepchildren?

BULLINGTON: A little bit. The CENTO desk was part of the Office of Regional Affairs, and yes, we had nothing like the attention that Arab-Israeli issues drew. Or even some of the

other issues of the day. Turkey and Pakistan individually had a lot of things going on that were interesting, but CENTO did not play in that too much.

Q: How about Iran at that time, was it, it hadn't started the greaarms buildup yet, had they?

BULLINGTON: I think you can say it had started, but it wasn't that far along. The Shah's government seemed to be pretty stable and, most people felt, was fairly progressive. There was nothing we worried about much with Iran in terms of its stability. Of those three countries, we were most worried about Pakistan.

Q: Were the Soviets felt to be a real menace at that time in thaarea?

BULLINGTON: They were to an extent in the Northern Iran - Eastern Turkey area. They were thought to have some aspirations there, and also to be trying to destabilize those governments and promote a communist takeover. Their success on the ground, however, was hard to discern. There wasn't any active pro-communist movement that I'm aware of in Iran or Turkey or Pakistan.

Q: Well then, you did this for?

BULLINGTON: Two years.

Q: Two years. By this time, had you, or had you before been married or?

BULLINGTON: No. I was single.

Q: Footloose and fancy free.

BULLINGTON: Absolutely. I had a girlfriend or two here iWashington, but they didn't want to marry me. (laughter)

Q: Well, then you went in '65 where?

BULLINGTON: In '65, I was assigned to Vietnam.

Q: Was this by mutual agreement?

BULLINGTON: It came out of the blue, actually. One day I got the call that 'Hey, you're going to go to FSI and study Vietnamese for awhile and go to Vietnam.' They assigned me to Hue as Vice Consul. I'd never followed Vietnam affairs. I'd heard of it, but that's about all. The war at that time was not really a big deal like it later became. We had military advisors there, but we didn't have any American combat units. Vietnam was still seen as pretty remote, and our involvement was only at the margins, or so it seemed. But it was obviously a growing concern, and growing very quickly. The State Department was rapidly building up the Embassy and what was called the Provincial Reporting Unit, which I was to be a part of even though I was stationed in Hue. It was a unit within the Political Section.

Q: You said you're going to be in Hue, but acting as the ProvinciaReporting Officer.

BULLINGTON: That's right. That's what I was to do. Travel around in the five provinces of I Corps, the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. I was to send in reports to the Embassy on the political situation, economic situation, pacification in the countryside, those sorts of things.

Q: Well, first let's talk a bit about the training. You tooVietnamese at the Vietnam training center?

BULLINGTON: Yes. Not the full course, I think eight or ten weeks, so I could get by but I wasn't really fluent in Vietnamese. It got a little better after I'd been there for awhile, but I did have French, so I could use French with most Vietnamese I needed to talk to. All educated Vietnamese at that time spoke French.

Q: Around you was Vietnam, before you went out has it becomcontroversial, our commitment there...

BULLINGTON: No, it wasn't really all that controversial at that time, in early 1965. I'm sure there were some people in academia and elsewhere that were criticizing the involvement already, but it wasn't something you saw in the papers. There were no demonstrations or anything like that. It was not that big a deal in 1965.

Q: So you went out in late '65?

BULLINGTON: I went out in July '65.

Q: July of '65, and right to, did they sort of brief you in Saigofirst?

BULLINGTON: Yes, I spent two weeks, maybe three, in Saigon, went around with some of the people in the Provincial Reporting Unit there. People like Bill Marsh, John Negroponte, Dick Holbrooke, Dick Teare, David Lambert, Vlad Lehovich.

Q: By the way, who was taking Vietnamese with you? Were you takinVietnamese with other Foreign Service Officers?

BULLINGTON: There were just three of us in the class. Lyn Baldygwas one, a USIA officer. I don't remember the other.

Q: Well, when you got to Vietnam in '65, how did the situation othe ground seem? What was the image you were getting?

BULLINGTON: It was deteriorating. That seemed to be pretty well established. The Provincial Reporting Unit was the part of the Mission that would bring the bad news, more than any other. The official MACV military chain of command was not giving as realistic reports as the State Department provincial reporters. Or the journalists. That was when the journalists were beginning to change from supportive to more and more questioning and sometimes downright hostile.

Q: Were you given any kind of firm, the Embassy Reporting Unit, were you given any equivalent of marching orders, go out and find this or find that?

BULLINGTON: No, no it was not to prove any point, or to look for anything in particular other than the normal things you would look for: how is the government doing, what do the people think, is there corruption, is the government winning or losing, are the hamlets safe or not safe?

Q: When you moved to Hue, what did we have in Hue at that time?

BULLINGTON: We had a small Consulate there. Sam Thomsen was the Consul and I was Vice Consul. There were the two of us, plus the communicator, Joe O'Neal, who later went on to become a Foreign Service Officer, along with three or four Foreign Service National support people. And that was it.

Q: That was, Hue was what, was it Marine or Army?

BULLINGTON: It was in the Marine AOR, Area of Responsibility.

Q: How did you find relations with the Marines at that time?

BULLINGTON: The first Marine combat units got there not long before I did, in March of 1965. At first they were only in Da Nang, protecting the airbase. We had the MACV advisors, and they were mostly Army. Those were the people I interacted with much more than Marines during that period. I was traveling, visiting the provinces (or sectors as they were called in military terms) and districts (sub-sectors in military terminology). The Americans I dealt with were mostly career Army people. I also visited some of the Army Special Forces teams, including one in Khe Sahn. There were lots of places in the mountains where we had Special Forces A-teams, they were called. I'd spend two, three, four nights usually, staying with the military folks in those districts or provinces or in villages with the A-teams. I'd use those as a base of operations and talk to the Vietnamese

government people and military, and to anybody else who seemed to have information about what was going on. I'd gather information and try to develop a feel for the situation, and then come back to Hue and write a report on “The Situation in Quang Tri Province,” or something like that. It was very akin to journalism.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the military reporting and the CORDS reporting was very much, you know, body count, pacified / non-pacified villages, it got very quantified in all that. Was the feeling that this is really not giving a very good picture?

BULLINGTON: This was before CORDS, which came later. Hamlet evaluation surveys, which sought to quantify everything regarding pacification, were begun later, '66 and '67. In '65, the only other reporting was in the military channel from the MACV sectors and sub-sectors. Yes, that did tend to be less than full. It relied on body counts and other numbers too much, largely overlooked the political and economic context, and really didn't give a good picture of what was going on, or so most of us in the Embassy felt.

Q: Well, there was a lot of pressure on the military people, to shoimprovement.

BULLINGTON: Oh, yes, their performance was measured in how many new hamlets their team had pacified. Of course they were just advisors, and it seemed to me awfully unfair to hold them responsible for the performance of the South Vietnamese military forces and government. It also led to overly optimistic reports.

Q: What was the impression you were getting of the South Vietnamesforces?

BULLINGTON: Mixed. In some areas, they were darn good. And in some areas they were awful. In northern I Corps, Quang Tri and Hue, was the ARVN First Division. That was reputed to be and was, in my opinion, a fine military outfit. It remained so through the rest of the war. The leadership was good, and so were the soldiers. In southern I Corps it was much different. The Second ARVN Division and some of the other forces down there were not nearly as good. The Rangers and other specialized units were quite good, but they

were part of the central reserve and would only be deployed from time to time. When they did come they were quite effective. The militia, the Regional Forces and Popular Forces, would vary even within a province, according to the leadership of the district chief and other officials there. In some districts they were good and in others they were not.

Q: Well what was going on, sort of one of the, North Vietnamese wait or was it mainly Vietcong in that area when you were there?

BULLINGTON: In I Corps, by then at least half the problem was regular NVA units. Also, they had reinforced Vietcong units with a lot of NVA troops. By that time we had regular NVA regiments in both northern and southern I Corps.

Q: Well, it must have been pretty dangerous, prancing around froplace to place.

BULLINGTON: Well, hell when you're 24, 25 years old you're invulnerable. You don't worry about that sort of thing. It was foolhardy, but I never felt a great sense of fear as I was traveling around. I did get shot at a couple of times, but as with most young people, personal safety wasn't at the top of my concerns. Should have been.

Q: How about, did you have problems with your reports, did you geany feedback on what was going, what you were reporting?

BULLINGTON: Some, but after I'd been there a few months, domestic politics began to take over from the provincial reporting. This was the time of Thich Tri Quang, whose headquarters was in Hue. He and his An Quang Buddhist movement began to make all kinds of problems for the central government, as did one of the leading military figures, Lt. Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi, who had been I Corps commander and before that, ARVN First Division commander. The political situation was really spiraling out of control, with a lot of student demonstrations and Buddhist demonstrations. After November, December of '65, that became the consuming issue we were focused on, reporting on the political unrest in I Corps. Hue was correctly seen as the center of it, although it was going on in

Saigon and other places as well. Hue was particularly important for the political stability of the country, so I began reporting more and more on those sorts of things, talking to the Buddhist leadership, the dissident military leadership, folks like that. Those reports were very much noticed. I was front and center among Embassy reporters, as a matter of fact, because of being in Hue. I remember one occasion in early '66 when there had been lots of protests and student demonstrations, and the central government had replaced the commander of I Corps in an effort to get better control of the political situation. The new commander was coming up to visit his division in Hue for the first time, but the division was essentially in rebellion and didn't want to receive him. I'd gone out to the division headquarters compound for the arrival ceremony. All the MACV advisors were there as well. At the same time the students were demonstrating, and they decided to march out to the First Division to protest against this new I Corps commander. Moreover, some of the First Division soldiers had entered a conspiracy to assassinate him. And indeed, after he made his speech and as he got into his helicopter to take off, some of the First Division soldiers started shooting at the helicopter, to try to kill him. It was an American helicopter, with an American crew and the commander's MACV advisor accompanying him. In self defense the door gunners on the helicopter started shooting back and killed some of the people on the ground that were shooting at them. But Thich Tri Quang and the students got it wrong. They claimed the Americans had come in and wantonly attacked their compatriots and killed their brethren. I started driving back to town just as the students got there, and they poured over my car, banging on the roof and shouting anti-American slogans. I thought they were going to take me out and kill me, but they didn't. After they passed by I went on to an appointment with Thich Tri Quang, the leader of the Buddhists. He was well known, had even been on the cover of Time magazine just a couple of weeks earlier. The previous week he had sent a message through me to President Johnson, and I was to deliver that day the President's response. So I went to his headquarters at Tu Dam Pagoda and delivered the message. One of the Consulate FSNs, Tuy-Cam, who is now my wife, was with me to interpret, since Tri Quang spoke no French. Just as I was finishing that task, a firefight broke out between the Vietnamese

troops around the pagoda and the Catholics in the neighboring area. We couldn't get back to the Consulate for awhile. But when we did, I wrote all this up, the assassination attempt on the Corps commander, the demonstrations, delivering the President's message to Tri Quang, the Buddhist-Catholic firefight in the middle of Hue. This was a hell of a report, a good day's work for a young FSO-8. Sam Thomsen, the Consul, had gone to Da Nang on temporary duty, and I was Acting Consul at the time. That report went all the way to the White House, and Dean Rusk was kind enough to send a special commendation, which was surely helpful when the next promotion panel met. Those anti-government demonstrations continued and became increasingly anti-American. There were daily demonstrations outside the Consulate. And finally in March student demonstrators burned down the Consulate and the USIA library.

Q: Well, Tony Lake was there at the time, was he?

BULLINGTON: No, I replaced Tony Lake. Tony had been there before, in my job. Shortly before the Consulate was burned, the Embassy sent up Tom Corcoran. He was Deputy Chief of the Political Section in Saigon. Since I was one lonely FSO-8 up there in Hue, and all these things were going on, they sent Tom to fill in as Consul.

Q: Well, Tom was the last man out of Hanoi too.

BULLINGTON: He closed down Hanoi and Hue and... Vientiane as well, think?

Q: I think Vientiane, at least for a little while.

BULLINGTON: He was quite a guy. We did a lot of reporting on that crisis, and had to evacuate American citizens from Hue. Both Tom and I were given Superior Honor Awards for our performance.

Q: What was your reading at that time of the Buddhist leadership?

BULLINGTON: Thich Tri Quang?

Q: Thich Tri Quang and all. Where were they coming from? How diyou see them?

BULLINGTON: A lot of people felt they were basically tools of the communists. I think probably they were, but unwittingly so. They served some communist objectives, and the communists certainly got behind them and were pushing that kind of anti-government and anti-American position. But the Buddhist leadership was not communist. That was pretty well demonstrated after the war. Thich Tri Quang was eventually imprisoned, but I don't know what happened to him thereafter. He certainly didn't emerge as a leader of the new society when the communists took over.

Q: Who was the head of Provincial Reporting in Saigon?

BULLINGTON: Bill Marsh was head of the Provincial Reporting Unit.His boss was Phil Habib, the Political Counselor.

Q: Did you feel that the Embassy was sort of with you, often if you were in the Consulate that they don't understand us or they're getting it wrong, did you feel for that?

BULLINGTON: They got it pretty well right. They kept sending up people for TDY, during the course of this Buddhist “struggle movement.” John Negroponte was one. He was in the Provincial Reporting Unit. He came and stayed for two or three weeks. Colonel Sam Wilson, who was the military advisor to the Ambassador, came and stayed for two or three weeks. They not only were getting my reporting, they were sending people up to be on the ground from time to time, where I could talk to them and brief them, and they could see the situation for themselves. So I think they had a pretty good handle on what was going on.

Q: What was your feeling, by the time you left there when?

BULLINGTON: I left right after the Consulate was burned down iMarch.

Q: '68?

BULLINGTON: No, this was March of '66. After that, the Embassy (primarily Phil Habib) brought me down to be staff aide to Henry Cabot Lodge.

Q: Let's talk a bit about your impression of Henry Cabot Lodge.

BULLINGTON: I liked him. It was a really heady experience for me to be a young FSO right at the very heart of the most important American international engagement at the time. Obviously I didn't have any decision power, but I was certainly sitting at the right hand of power, filtering all the information coming and going to the Ambassador. It was an exciting time. I liked Lodge, thought he was competent, thought he was a decent man. I got along with him quite well.

Q: Did he get out much?

BULLINGTON: Some. In fact I usually went with him. I carried his briefcase on several trips. He both got out some himself, and he would listen to the other people in the Embassy that got out, especially the young officers in the Provincial Reporting Unit. I remember one time he went on home leave for a month. I didn't have anything to do during that month, so I asked if I could go spend some time in the provinces. He agreed that I could go to Long An province down in the Mekong Delta where they were having a special experiment at the time involving Colonel Sam Wilson, who had been with me in Hue for awhile. They put him in charge of both the American combat units in the province and the MACV military advisors and civilians involved in pacification. This was something that had not been done before. So I thought it'd be interesting to go down and do some reporting on how that was going. I wrote a long report to Lodge when he got back. He sent it on to the President.

Q: How were things going that sort of southern tip of South Vietnam?

BULLINGTON: It was going pretty well, by this time. In '65 the security situation was clearly deteriorating. In '66, once we got through the political turbulence, it had become stabilized. I'm not sure that we were making much progress, but the overall situation there and in most of the country was no longer deteriorating and had been stabilized.

Q: Were you able to develop sort of good relations with youVietnamese counterparts or was this a problem?

BULLINGTON: Oh, yes, good relations. Obviously it depends on the individuals, but for the most part we were able to develop quite close relations with them. In fact I married a Vietnamese..

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

BULLINGTON: She was a Foreign Service National employee working at the Consulate in Hue. As I mentioned before, she was my interpreter when I met with Thich Tri Quang. We had developed an interest in each other when I was there. After I went to the Embassy as Lodge's aide, she was transferred to AID in Saigon, and the courtship became more serious. I'd been engaged to a woman in Washington before I left for Vietnam, and the idea was when I finished my tour in Vietnam we were going to get married. But when I finished that first tour and came back I found that she had decided she didn't like the Vietnam War or anything to do with it including me. Then my courtship with Tuy-Cam really got serious. We were married right before I left Vietnam in '68.

Q: Well, a lot of relationships have broken up over the Vietnam war.

BULLINGTON: No doubt.

Q: Were you aware of the building intensity of the anti-Vietnamovement in the United States?

BULLINGTON: I was aware of it in the sense that I was reading Stars and Stripes and occasionally Time and Newsweek, but I guess I was not really personally, dramatically aware of it until I came back, after I had completed my time with Lodge. That was when my lady friend in Washington told me she didn't want anything to do with me or the War. Moreover, I saw all the snow and ice around Washington (it was in January), and I quickly decided I wanted to go back to Vietnam.

Q: '68.

BULLINGTON: No, January '67. It was then that I first got a feel for what was going on in the U.S., and how much anti-war sentiment there was.

Q: When you came back, you came back in '67 to when?

BULLINGTON: I was there until March of '68. This was my third job in Vietnam. First Hue, and then staff aide to Lodge, and the third tour I came back to work in what by then was the CORDS program in Quang Tri province, the northernmost province of South Vietnam. I could have gone other places. I had an interview with John Paul Vann in III Corps, and he wanted me to work for him. But I went back to I Corps, mainly because by this time Tuy-Cam was there. She was in Da Nang, where the US Consulate had been moved after it was burned in Hue. I wanted to be in that region so we could continue the courtship.

Q: Well, before we leave, your time with Henry Cabot Lodge... Whawere his work habits?

BULLINGTON: He was a methodical sort of guy. He would listen, especially to Phil Habib, who I think was by far the most influential person in the Embassy. He had regular relations with Westy, General Westmoreland. I didn't see them either as particularly close or particularly negative in any way. It was a businesslike relationship. Westy would come over once or twice a week and that was about it. The CIA Chief of Station was also influential, as was Barry Zorthian, the JUSPAO chief.

Q: U.S. Public Affairs Office.

BULLINGTON: Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office.

Q: Did you deal at all with the press or have any social contacwith the press at that time?

BULLINGTON: Yes, even in Hue. With my background in journalism I was interested in the press, and there were a lot of journalists who came through when I was in Hue. Joe Alsop, Frankie Fitzgerald, Johnny Apple, Neil Sheehan, Don Oberdorfer, several others. There was Keyes Beach, Chicago Daily News. A reporter I got to know well when I was in Saigon was George MacArthur, with Associated Press and the Los Angeles Times, mainly because George was dating Eva Kim. Eva was Cabot Lodge's secretary and I was the staff aide, so we were in the same social circle there. In fact I had dinner with George and Eva last night.

Q: I tried to interview Eva, but she didn't want to.

BULLINGTON: She would be a wealth of information.

Q: Oh, I know, she was the institution.

BULLINGTON: She's a dear friend. Q: Well then, you were up in Quang Tri...

BULLINGTON: The northernmost province, right up on the DMZ.

Q: What was the situation in '67, you know, prior to Tet?

BULLINGTON: We had the big war up there. There were large combat units, mostly Marines at that time. All along route 9, which runs south of the DMZ from the coast to the main road junction in Laos, called Tchepone, there were heavy battles. Camp Carroll, the Rockpile, Cam Lo, scenes of big, big battles.

Q: So what were you doing?

BULLINGTON: At that time with CORDS there was a senior province representative in each province, and under the province rep were two deputies, at least this is the way it was in Quang Tri, one for the military side, and one for the civilian side of the pacification effort. I was the deputy for the civilian side. That was the position. But the first job really was totally focused on an operation to remove about 10,000 people from the southern half of the DMZ. The DMZ was a river and a strip of a couple kilometers on each side of the river. McNamara had come up with this scheme (which did not work at all) to have electronic barriers along the DMZ to prevent infiltration from the north. We called it derisively the McNamara Line. We had to remove these people from the southern half of the DMZ preparatory to building this McNamara Line. My job was to take care of the refugees and help resettle them south of there in a place called Cam Lo. The first day I got to Quang Tri they started coming, about 10,000 refugees to organize feeding and care for. The Marines assigned a colonel to work with me. I also had an ARVN colonel for a counterpart. And we got 'em resettled.

Q: Well, you can resettle people but we're talking about people who are working and fishing and farming and all that, you move them and you give them shelter and all, but were they able to sort of gainfully support themselves?

BULLINGTON: No, they were basically on the dole. And we had to feed them with bulgur wheat and other things that they didn't much want to eat. Some of them were able to do a little bit of farming eventually. Largely they were on the dole or they were employed as militia, in the Popular Forces. These people were mostly Catholics, and there was a very active priest who got them organized.

Q: So, was there a major invasion down there, or was this... What were the northern Vietnamese doing, just testing or were they really trying to get across.

BULLINGTON: Some were coming across the DMZ, right through the McNamara Line. But they were mostly going around it, going around through Laos down the Ho Chi Minh trail and then coming back into areas of northern and southern I Corps and attacking all along a north-south front.

Q: At one point, it was later I guess after you left, at Khe-Sahn?

BULLINGTON: Oh, no, I was there. In Quang Tri. Khe Sahn is in Quang Tri province. I visited it a couple times. During the Tet offensive is when it became so notable. I had quite an adventure during the Tet Offensive.

Q: Let's talk about the Tet Offensive.

BULLINGTON: I was working in Quang Tri, but I had decided to go down to visit Hue, to see Tuy-Cam. We were engaged by this time. She was working in the Consulate General in Da Nang and had come up to her home in Hue, and I was to come down from Quang Tri, to be with her for her last Tet in Vietnam before we were to be married in March and go off to the U.S. So it was a big deal for her and the family. I had done some favors for a French guy, he was Franco-Vietnamese actually, whose company ran the power plants in Hue and Quang Tri. I had put him on some Air America flights when the roads were blocked. So he had invited me when I visited Hue to stay in a little guesthouse they had at the power plant there. I flew down on the afternoon Air America flight from Quang Tri, arriving in Hue on the afternoon of January 30th, 1968. This proved to be a poor choice of time to visit Hue. I went by the CORDS headquarters, and was able to borrow one of their USAID jeeps to get around town. We'd had some intelligence in Quang Tri that there might be attacks during that period, but it didn't seem to be anything unusual. There were always attacks of one sort or another. When I got to Hue I asked at CORDS headquarters if anything special was going on, and they said no, though there were some low-level rumors that there might be problems during the Tet holidays. But nobody seemed to be especially concerned. We had dinner that night at Tuy-Cam's house. We had two other

Americans there. One was Steve Miller, who was the USIA representative in Thua Thin province, where Hue is located. He had been a Foreign Service classmate of mine. The other was Steve Haukness, who was a friend of Tuy-Cam's at the Consulate in Da Nang. He was a Foreign Service communicator. He had never visited Hue so he wanted to come up to the old imperial capital for some tourism. After a nice Vietnamese dinner at Tuy-Cam's house, the two Steves went to Steve Miller's house, and I went back to the power plant, to the guest room, to spend the night. About two a.m., I was awakened by the sounds of incoming mortars. It was evident that there was some serious fighting going on. Of course there wasn't much I could do about it. I expected that it would be over by dawn. There had never been a North Vietnamese or VC attack in a major city where they had come and stayed. It was always a hit and run thing. They would get out of town by dawn because by occupying fixed positions in an urban area they became vulnerable to counterattacks. By dawn things had quieted down, so I figured that's what had happened, they had come in and raided the town and blew up a bridge or something like that and were gone. I walked out of the door of the guest room and across the courtyard into the power plant looking for my French friend. He was in the power plant, but when I got there he said, “Oh, my god, don't you see what's happened? There they are!” And he pointed to the other end of the courtyard where for the first time I saw armed men with pith helmets. They obviously weren't friendlies. My friend said “Get back, get back,” and I did. I went back to the guest room and spent several very anxious hours there. Eventually that afternoon my friend came by and knocked on the door. It was with some terror that I opened that door, not knowing what I would find, but thankfully it was my friend instead of the NVA. He told me a little more about what was going on. The power plant obviously was a main target of any invading army that's going to occupy a city. The NVA had set up a command post right there in the power plant, not more than 25, 30 yards from the guest room where I was staying. My friend said that it's not a good idea to stay at the power plant, and I certainly agreed with that. So we worked out a signal. That evening he was to stand across the courtyard and give me a thumbs-up when it was clear to move across. The first time we tried he gave me a 'don't come' signal because the NVA were evidently

looking. But the next time, about sundown, they were all busily cooking dinner around a campfire, and he signaled me to 'come on.' I walked across the courtyard with my heart in my throat. If the NVA soldiers noticed me they didn't do anything. They probably assumed I was a Frenchman working at the power plant. I passed within 25, 30 yards of them. When I got to the other side of the courtyard my friend guided me over some fences, through some backyards to a house where two French priests welcomed me. One, Father Cressonier, had been in Hue for 30 years with the Soci#t# des Missions Etrang#res, the missionary society headquartered in Paris that was active in Vietnam. The other, Father Poncet, had been at Khe Sahn. Because of the fighting at Khe Sahn he had to leave a few weeks before that and was staying with Father Cressonier in Hue. Cressonier was a big guy like me, and he gave me one of his soutanes, the black gown, and the beads and the whole priestly outfit; so for the next nine days I became a French priest behind the North Vietnamese lines in Hue. For an East Tennessee hillbilly raised in the Church of Christ, that it itself was quite a thrill. A couple of times the local VC cadre came to the door, but they didn't demand to come in. If they did, the story was going to be that I was a visiting French-Canadian priest. I don't know whether that would have worked or not, but thankfully we didn't have to put it to the test. The greatest danger turned out to be the counterattack, especially incoming artillery from friendly forces. The fighting was pretty intense around there, and we saw a lot of refugees and a lot of North Vietnamese units, including one tank, which they had evidently captured from the ARVN. There was a lot of incoming mortar and artillery fire. Father Cressonier's house was a two-story French Colonial type. When the artillery starting coming in heavily we would all go downstairs, and huddle under the staircase. And thankfully so, because we took a direct hit from what was probably a 105 mm artillery shell. The house became one-story all of a sudden. The second story just was no longer there. But we were downstairs and didn't get hurt. After nine days of this, the U.S. Marines, working their way house to house in fierce combat throughout Hue, got to where I was, the priest's house, and liberated me. The company commander was Ron Christmas. He later went on to become a Marine Lieutenant General. I was never so glad to see anyone as Captain Christmas and his Marines.

They wrapped me in a blanket and carried me out as if I were a wounded Marine, so the neighbors would not see that these priests had been harboring an American. I had invited, in fact urged, the two priests to come with me to safety, but they had pastoral duties they felt kept them there. There were Catholic refugees they could now get to at a nearby cathedral, several thousand people. They wanted to stay and minister to the flock. The Marines took me to MACV headquarters. I spent one night there, and was interviewed by reporters. The next day the story of my liberation was on the front page of the Washington Post. In fact that's how my parents found out about it, through a newspaper report. They'd been told by the State Department that I was missing. They eventually saw the newspaper report from the Washington Post via the Chattanooga paper. After another day at MACV, I went to Da Nang to take a bath, which I hadn't had in nearly two weeks, and get some food as well as to report in to the CORDS regional headquarters there. After the staff at CORDS debriefed me, I told them I had to go back to look for Tuy-Cam. Even though the house where she lived was no more than 500 yards away from Father Cressonier's house, there was no way I could get there because it was on the other side of the Phu Cam canal, which was one of the many lines along which the fighting took place. I knew the Marines would eventually get there, so I wanted to go back to Hue. My CORDS bosses told me no, you can't go. I told them the hell with that, I'm going. By that time I'd been around long enough and knew the territory well enough to arrange my own travel, so I just went out to Da Nang airbase where I knew the appropriate sergeant. I got on a helicopter back to Hue, to look for Tuy-Cam. When I landed at the helicopter pad, she was there! She and her family had just made it to safety that morning, and she had come to the helicopter pad to look for me, and was trying to go to Da Nang. So that's where I found her. We were reunited on Valentine's Day at the helicopter pad outside the MACV compound in Hue. Her family was at a nearby refugee camp. She had two brothers who were military officers, one was an ARVN officer and the other was an Air Force cadet. They were both home on leave for Tet. They had successfully hidden in the attic of the house for the first few days. But eventually because of all the incoming ordnance they decided it wouldn't be safe where they were. The family all left the house and was on the way out of town with other

refugees when a group of VC or NVA stopped them and took out all the young males in the group. Tuy-Cam's two brothers were taken out and apparently shot. They were never heard from again.

Q: What happened, let's see, Haukness was killed there, wasn't he?

BULLINGTON: And Miller. After I got back and found Tuy-Cam, I began looking for them too. A couple of days later the Marines found Steve Miller's body with his hands tied behind him. He had evidently been executed, shot in the back of the head. Haukness was last seen being led off toward the west, out into the jungle. We never did find his body at the time. I don't know whether his remains have ever been found since then.

Q: What happened to you... she was your fianc# still?

BULLINGTON: Yes.

Q: What happened then?

BULLINGTON: We got married. It was near the end of my tour, in March. We got married at the Consulate General in Da Nang. Before Tet, we had planned a traditional Vietnamese style wedding in Hue, but now we couldn't do that. We organized the wedding right at the Consulate.

Q: Who was consul general?

BULLINGTON: Chuck Cross.

Q: He's now in Seattle.

BULLINGTON: Is he? Chuck had been in Da Nang only a few months. Barney Koren was before him, Chuck replaced Barney. Chuck was away on vacation, and at his invitation we spent our wedding night in the Consul General's residence.

Q: Then you went back to the states?

BULLINGTON: Not immediately. After about a week, we went down to Saigon, but had all kinds of trouble getting Tuy-Cam's passport. They kept asking for official papers that were in Hue. We pointed out that we couldn't go back to Hue, and since Hue was largely destroyed, particularly the government buildings, we couldn't get those papers even if we went there. Eventually I had to get Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky to intervene. I was able to do this because I knew Ky's aide from the time I had been Lodge's aide.

Q: So, you then at that point went back to the States?

BULLINGTON: Went back to the States, and spent three or four months working in the Department on the Vietnam desk and getting ready to go to Harvard. The State Department decided that I needed more education, and they sent me off to the Kennedy School of Government. A real battlefield, as it turned out.

Q: Okay. This is probably a good place to stop. I'll put at the end where we are so when we pick this up, probably, maybe in a year or so, that you're now running the Peace Corps in Niamey?

BULLINGTON: I'm Peace Corps director in Niamey now.

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Q: Today is July 10, 2002. Jim, you're back from Niger on homleave. You were at the Kennedy school from when to when?

BULLINGTON: From September '68 through the academic year, May oJune of '69.

Q: This is right in the middle of all the protests about Vietnam and all this. How did, what was your observation as a student at the Kennedy school about how this was playing out there?

BULLINGTON: After they began asking me how many babies I'd killed while I was in Vietnam, I tended not to like the student protestors very much. It seemed to me they were mouthing slogans rather than espousing policies. Eventually I grew a beard and got a bicycle and blended into the background and avoided them. But it was discomforting, coming from Vietnam, to see that sort of blind hostility. I think I wouldn't have minded so much a reasoned debate. But that's not what it was, even in this bastion of learning, Harvard University. These students were burning books of professors with whom they didn't agree, like Sam Huntington and Henry Kissinger. I thought that was abominable. But I enjoyed Harvard nonetheless. I had some interesting courses, including Henry Kissinger's seminar on national security policy. I'd met him while I was in Vietnam. He had come on some study missions and stayed at my house once in Hue. So I took his course, and really enjoyed it. I learned a lot and enjoyed Harvard except for the student protests.

Q: How did you find the faculty, was the faculty slamming thgovernment all the time?

BULLINGTON: Parts of it were and parts of it weren't. Certainly Henry Kissinger and Sam Huntington and the likes of those were not. That fall there was a pretty violent protest movement where the students occupied the administration building and were rifling through the personnel files of the faculty, and publishing in their underground journal nasty things that they had dug out of the files. The University eventually called the police to remove them. They resisted violently and spat on the police and then of course claimed police brutality when the police hit them back. The police finally got them out of there. I was dismayed by the pusillanimous reaction of the administration and the faculty to these kinds of provocations.

Q: Now Harvard did not come out of this very well.

BULLINGTON: I didn't think so.

Q: Some Universities showed that they had the ability to havreasoned debate and not allow the crazies to take over, but Harvard...

BULLINGTON: They abdicated. There was some reasoned debate occasionally, but it was drowned out by the slogans and the violence and the nastiness.

Q: Well then, you got out in '69. Whither?

BULLINGTON: My first assignment was to INR, but I wasn't there very long. By this time Kissinger, my former professor, had become National Security Advisor. He created a project called the Vietnam Special Studies Group to investigate the results of the Tet Offensive and the counteroffensive that had been launched by the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces thereafter, and to see where we stood on pacification of the countryside, the guerrilla war, the insurgency war. This was an inter-agency study, involving the NSC staff, the State Department, CIA, DIA and the Joint Staff of the JCS. There were five of us on it, and I was the State Department representative. We were working out of the NSC. So even though I was nominally assigned to INR, what I did for thenext year was work in the NSC on this project. That involved a couple of trips back to Vietnam and writing up a long report and going around to the various agencies to brief them on our findings.

Q: '69 to '70.

BULLINGTON: Right.

Q: How did you find the outlook of, you know the State representative, CIA, Defense and others? Were you coming at it from different angles?

BULLINGTON: Not too much. Perhaps our agencies were, but not the members of our group. We had been given a charter to determine what was going on, and although coming from different backgrounds I don't think we had any preconceived notions because we genuinely didn't know. We all had Vietnam experience. We did research, including going back to Vietnam, each to two or three provinces, and then putting our findings together along with the information that was coming in from CIA and Defense and from the Embassy.

Q: Where did you go?

BULLINGTON: I went to where I had spent most of my time, I Corps. I was traveling around in Quang Tri, Hue and Da Nang primarily. We all went to different areas and then put our information together in the final study. We really didn't know what to expect. And frankly I was very surprised by the positive developments I found. I had left right in the wake of the Tet Offensive in '68, when things looked pretty bad. By the time I got back there on this study in '70 things had really turned around in terms of the counter-insurgency effort. Places that were very much under enemy control before were now secure. Roads that you couldn't travel at all before were now open and being used for normal commerce. We determined that something approaching ninety percent of the populated areas of Vietnam were by that time under good government control. They still had not gotten control of some of the far outlying areas, and they certainly didn't control the largely unpopulated jungles where major North Vietnamese Army elements were still operating. We, the Americans, were withdrawing our forces at that point, and the South Vietnamese forces did not have the offensive punch to go out and deal with these large units. However, they did have the defensive capability, along with militia forces, to pretty well defend the populated areas of South Vietnam. It turned out that the enemy, particularly the VC part of it, the guerilla part of it, had lost tremendously in the Tet Offensive. Tet had been a military victory for the Americans and South Vietnamese. We didn't realize at the time the full extent of the damage we had inflicted. In late '68, '69

and '70, when we began pushing back into the countryside, there wasn't much resistance there. The South Vietnamese with our help were able to re-establish control over the countryside. Our study found, and reported to Kissinger and the other principals in Washington, that by that time, in mid to late '70, the counter-insurgency part of the war had essentially been won. There was still some mopping up to be done, still some problems, but we had basically won that part of the war. What we still had to deal with were the large, regular North Vietnamese units, the more conventional part of the war. But that was just the time when the American combat elements that were best equipped to do this were being withdrawn. The idea was that we would beef up the South Vietnamese army further and give them the ability to deal with this threat, but we never did that, unfortunately.

Q: Was it within the NSC? Were you sort of involved with the NSC or were you not in it but sort of sending papers to it or something like that?

BULLINGTON: Somewhere in between. We had an office in the NSC, in the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House, and that's where we spent most of our time, but I also spent some time at my desk in INR. I really regarded the NSC people that I reported to as my bosses. I was more or less seconded from INR, but still my home base was INR and that's who wrote my EER and where I got my personnel support.

Q: Well, actually there was a pretty solid cadre of VietnaVeterans, Foreign Service veterans in the NSC at that time.

BULLINGTON: No, they weren't there yet. At that time there weren'any of my generation on the NSC staff.

Q: Was there an attitude about Vietnam of the NSC, a 'let's just gethe hell out of there and move on.'?

BULLINGTON: No, not at that time. This was the beginning of the Nixon Administration. Henry Kissinger had come in with it in 1969. Particularly that first year or so, they knew

that we had to do something differently, but there was no defeatism that I found. This was really when they put meat on the idea of Vietnamization. I think our group's positive report of what happened in the countryside in 1969 and the first part of 1970 gave some encouragement to that, to the notion that 'well, hey, maybe this Vietnamization thing can really be done,' that we can turn over the war mostly to the South Vietnamese. In fact by that time or soon thereafter we more or less had turned over the anti-guerrilla, counter-insurgency part of it to the Vietnamese. But we never successfully turned over the rest of it, the big unit conventional war.

Q: When that was done did you go back to INR?

BULLINGTON: No. I then went to Thai language training. I was ready to start in a new direction, and I didn't like the boss I had in INR, so I lobbied to get out of there.

Q: Where were you put in INR?

BULLINGTON: I was in the Southeast Asia part of it, basically the Vietnam desk. I didn't like the guy that ran that office. After the NSC job I managed to get myself assigned to Thai language training, studied for ten months at FSI and went off to Chiang Mai.

Q: How did you find Thai language and the training?

BULLINGTON: Oh it was an excellent program. I learned Thai pretty well, with a 3+ on my exam. There were just two of us in the class, so it was very intensive. Hal Colebaugh was my classmate. The teachers were great. When I got to Thailand I still had a lot of language learning to do, but I was basically able to communicate at the professional level and read a newspaper. That's not easy in Thai because it's a tonal language and doesn't use Roman script. I felt the language training was very good.

Q: Chiang-Mai, when you went there, you were in Chiang-Mai from wheto when?

BULLINGTON: That would have been 1971 to '73.

Q: What was Chiang-Mai like when you got there?

BULLINGTON: Beautiful place. It had the reputation then of being the nicest city in Thailand. It was certainly a lot nicer than Bangkok, which even then had grown to be a metropolis with all the typical big city problems of traffic and pollution and crime. Chiang Mai was more the 'real Asia', more what one's romantic notions of Asia were, but at the same time it had modernized to the point where there were a couple of first class tourist hotels and a few good restaurants, a fairly good infrastructure in terms of roads and public utilities. It was a really pleasant place.

Q: What was the staff of the consulate like?

BULLINGTON: We had three officers. I was the number two to thConsul.

Q: Who was there?

BULLINGTON: Jim Montgomery was Principal Officer. I was the political-economic officer, and the third officer did the consular and admin work.

Q: Who was that?

BULLINGTON: Jim Henderson. Mahlon Henderson, he went by Jim. It was fairly quiet, but we got very much involved in narcotics work. Chiang Mai at that time, and still today for that matter, was at the heart of what was termed the 'golden triangle' of opium production in northern Thailand, Laos and Burma, where the opium was grown and transformed into heroin, and then trafficked down through Bangkok to markets in the United States and Europe. That was the biggest U.S. interest there at that time and what we spent most of our time on. There was also the remnant of an insurgency in northern Thailand that was still of some interest. We were just at the tail end of our AID program, so we were still

doing some economic assistance; we still had one AID officer there. But I would say 70-80 percent of our time was focused on narcotics.

Q: Well, as the political economic officer, what were you doing?

BULLINGTON: Reporting, traveling around the provinces, meeting the local officials, learning about the situation. Talking to the opposition parties, if I could find them. Going out to the areas where the poppies were growing. Working with some of the NGOs and international organizations to see what they were doing in terms of crop substitution, trying to get rid of the opium production and replace it with beans or corn. They were trying to get the farmers to grow beans, and they found out eventually that the beans simply provided a great fertilizer for the poppies and made them grow better. Farmers began to inter-crop them, one row of poppies and one row of beans, and it just did wonderful things for the poppies. None of these efforts worked. I became, after those two years of working on narcotics, a little bit... a lot disillusioned with the whole idea of trying to deal with our domestic narcotics problem in places like northern Thailand. I know it didn't work there and I'm dubious that it works anywhere. There's just too much corruption involved. The poor peasant growing those poppies gets almost nothing for the opium, but by the time it gets to the streets of Washington or New York in the form of heroin it's worth tens of thousands of dollars. The profit margin is just too great. Suppressing production didn't work, and I'm dubious that it ever will.

Q: Did you sort of find payoffs at almost every level?

BULLINGTON: Oh, there was enormous corruption, yes. The labs that transformed opium to heroin were just across the Thai border into Burma where we couldn't get at them from Thailand. But I'm sure had we been able to get at them from the Burmese side they would have gone to Laos or somewhere else. Interestingly the biggest traffickers were elements of the old Kuomintang army that had fled China in 1949. For a number of years they still had some connections with Taiwan. But by this time, the early '70s, any political content

had disappeared and they were just criminals, even though they had originated as a division of the Kuomintang army that had come down out of China.

Q: Were there efforts on the part of central government to get non-corrupt governors and local people in or was it pervasive up and down the whole..?

BULLINGTON: The government made some efforts and for a time they would have limited success. In particular they established a new outfit called the Border Patrol Police, BPP, and we had advisors with them. Both the Agency and DEA had agents in Chiang Mai, working with the BPP. But this did not succeed for long, as even the BPP became corrupt. If you got the traffickers at one level they would go to another level, if you got them in one area they would simply move to another. In my judgment our war on narcotics has been unsuccessful.

Q: Where were the drug lords themselves living, I mean the ones whwere making at least the primary, the first cut of the big profits?

BULLINGTON: Most of them were living in that border area, over in Burma. But many of them reportedly had mansions and girlfriends and families in Chiang Mai and would periodically come there for the high life. They managed always to avoid being arrested.

Q: How did you, was there any political life going on there?

BULLINGTON: Not a lot. The Thai government is very centralized, and the regional governors are creatures of the central government. There was some interesting economic development activity going on, already the beginnings of substantial foreign investment, and lots of new dams and roads. You could see it was a fairly rapidly developing country.

Q: How about, well this would be about the textile period, wasn't it?

BULLINGTON: Yes, there were textile plants there that were coming up. My wife bought a lot of beautiful cloth. The Thai silk of Chiang Mai is famous.

Q: Could you travel around fairly easily, or were places todangerous to go to?

BULLINGTON: You could go almost anywhere. There were a couple of places way up into the border regions where it got a little difficult, but the government didn't put any obstacles in the way. If we judged it to be a reasonably secure place we could go there. I traveled a lot, including close to the Burmese border.

Q: Did the Vietnam war play any role where you were at that time?

BULLINGTON: Very little. We didn't have any U.S. bases in northern Thailand. They were over in the northeast, pretty far away from Chiang Mai, so we didn't have any GI's visiting or any real impact from the war in our consular district.

Q: Did, would you give tourists, I mean American kids getting itrouble, that sort of thing?

BULLINGTON: Yes, there were a lot of those, the hippies. Chiang Mai was a stop on the narcotics road. They would typically go to Nepal and then to Chiang Mai and Vientiane and places like that where narcotics were available. Some of them got in trouble, and we had occasional consular problems of that sort, but not an awful lot.

Q: Did you have much problem getting them out?

BULLINGTON: No. The government was friendly and cooperative, anworked with us very nicely.

Q: Did you go to Bangkok much?

BULLINGTON: Not when I could avoid it. I preferred being in ChianMai. It was a much more pleasant place.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

BULLINGTON: Goodness, you put me on the spot now. That shows you how much I went to Bangkok (laughter). I remember Ed Masters was the DCM. He came up to visit, but I don't think the Ambassador ever came to Chiang Mai while I was there.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BULLINGTON: '71 to '73.

Q: It would have been Len Unger.

BULLINGTON: Len Unger, that's it, Len Unger.

Q: Well, after this rather pleasant interlude...

BULLINGTON: Back to the Vietnam business. This was 1973, with the Paris Agreement. They needed lots of people with Vietnam experience to work both in Vietnam and on Vietnamese affairs in Washington. I ended up in the latter category, on the Vietnam desk in the State Department.

Q: Sort of like the tar baby, you couldn't get away from it.

BULLINGTON: Yes. After learning Thai and two years in Chiang-Mai, the idea was that I would move to the Embassy for the next two years. But that didn't happen because they decided they needed people with Vietnam experience and I was tapped.

Q: Now you were there from '73 to?

BULLINGTON: Through the fall of Vietnam, '73 to '75. It was called the Vietnam Working Group, basically the Vietnam desk in the State Department.

Q: Who was in charge of the group?

BULLINGTON: Bob Wenzel was the director. Ammon Bartley was the deputy director. There were seven, eight officers and three secretaries.

Q: What were you doing?

BULLINGTON: I was the internal political officer, looking at internal political affairs in South Vietnam. Elections, political parties, those sorts of things. We had an economics guy, an external political guy, a political-military officer, a few others.

Q: What was happening internally?

BULLINGTON: The main focus was on the evolution of the situation under the peace agreement. There was supposed to be a cease-fire, but neither side observed it very well, and each was trying to consolidate its hold wherever there was gray area, disputed area. We dealt a lot with Congress, the public and the anti-war movement. I spent a lot of time writing responses to Congressional committees. I wrote speeches for Ellsworth Bunker. We were also focused on the continuing negotiations in Paris, and supported the delegation over there. A lot of our analyses were about whether the South Vietnamese were going to be able to continue to resist in the situation that was brought about by the Paris Agreement.

Q: As you went in there and started looking at that, what was youimpression of the strength or lack thereof of the South Vietnamese?

BULLINGTON: I had no strong opinions on it one way or another at first. I'd been off in Chiang Mai for a couple of years, and in Thai language training before that. I'd read the newspapers, but I'd really lost touch with what was going on in Vietnam. So I really hadn't focused on Vietnam for three years, and things had changed dramatically. I came to believe after a few months that the South Vietnamese could have held on and eventually

a Korea type solution might have emerged; but as time went on and U.S. support declined they were getting weaker rather than stronger, and the enemy was getting stronger rather than weaker. Pretty soon the balance tilted, and it was clear that the North Vietnamese were not willing to settle for less than the whole of Vietnam. It also became apparent, particularly for someone in Washington working on Vietnamese affairs, twenty hours a day it seemed like, that the United States was no longer politically willing or able to sustain South Vietnam. That's eventually what happened. We assured their defeat by cutting our military and economic support to insufficient levels. I made a couple of trips back to look at the situation on the ground, one in December of '73, the other and more important one in December of '74, and again I spent a lot of time in northern South Vietnam where I had worked, but also in some other places including Saigon and the Mekong Delta. Putting together what I had learned in Washington with what I saw was going on in Vietnam, it became evident to me that the end was nigh. The Embassy would not admit that. Graham Martin was the Ambassador then, and was in my view out of touch with reality, both in the United States and in Vietnam. There was no indication that the Embassy realized the gravity of the situation and how near we were already to the total loss of South Vietnam, or the political impossibility of a U.S. rescue. I still can't understand why they didn't see it, why everybody didn't see it. It was clear if you looked at just the logistics picture. I got the figures from the Pentagon, of how much ammunition and spare parts and POL and everything necessary to fight a war, how much of it we were sending into South Vietnam, and how much they were using up, and it didn't balance. Even at the level of warfare that was going on in December of '74, the South Vietnamese were using it up at such a rate that you could see the end. Probably before late '75, or certainly by early '76, they would run out of bullets, quite literally. And if - as I saw to be almost a certainty - the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive as soon as they perceived this growing South Vietnamese weakness, then the end would come a lot quicker than that. The evidence of this was everywhere when I visited Vietnam in December '74. The artillery tubes that were limited to one or two rounds a night because they didn't have enough ammunition, the soldiers that went out on patrol with only one hand grenade because there weren't enough

to issue them more. VNAF, the Vietnamese Air Force, was essentially grounded for lack of spare parts and POL. I put that together with the economic troubles and declining morale. And no army, no army fights to the last bullet, literally. The South Vietnamese officers that I talked to clearly saw what was happening. They said 'You, our allies, are not giving us the support we must have to handle the situation that we are facing. And if the North Vietnamese attack, we won't be able to contain them.' So what happens in such a situation is that morale collapses before they literally get down to the last bullet. That's what did happen shortly thereafter, in the spring of 1975, when the NVA launched a major offensive and the South Vietnamese army basically collapsed. I wrote a paper when I got back from that trip, this would have been the final days of December or the first few days of January in '75, and gave it to Phil Habib, who was Assistant Secretary for East Asia. Although I didn't know it at the time, he gave it to Kissinger, and Kissinger read it and apparently thought it meritorious, because in his memoirs published four or five years ago, the volume of his memoirs on his service under the Ford Administration, he quoted my memo at some length. I was proud of that. I was the only career FSO, I think, to have a paper quoted in that volume of his memoirs. He said something to the effect that at least a few people recognized what was coming and warned that South Vietnam was about to fall, and one of them was Jim Bullington. Then he quoted the memo. I was pleased that somebody heard my warning; but it didn't make any difference in the end.

Q: Were you working on this when Vietnam collapsed?

BULLINGTON: Yes.

Q: What were you all doing?

BULLINGTON: The main thing I was personally concerned about was trying to get the Embassy and others to take action to save the South Vietnamese for whom I felt we were responsible, especially the Foreign Service National employees. There were three or four of us mid-level officers, Lionel Rosenblatt was one of them, I guess he was in INR at

the time, and somebody else, I can't think of his name, but this guy went to Vietnam with Lionel.

Q: Yes.

BULLINGTON: You know who I'm talking about.

Q: Oh, yes, I do.

BULLINGTON: Yes. He was in the Executive Secretariat, I think. Anyway, the three of us and maybe there was one or two others involved, but basically the three of us formed a sort of cabal, trying to get the U.S. government to do the right thing by the South Vietnamese to whom we had special obligations. We really worked on that as much as we could. Lionel and this other guy ended up just taking off and going back to Vietnam without authorization and trying to save our Vietnamese friends on a retail basis, one by one. I didn't feel like I could do that, but I did everything I possibly could to move the Department, to move the Embassy and Graham Martin, to get them to take action on evacuating these people. And it was like moving a mountain, I'll tell you. Graham Martin did not want to be moved.

Q: Was there any talk that you heard of getting them out of there?

BULLINGTON: We certainly talked about it. We literally thought that he had lost touch with reality. Not that he was insane, but what he said and what the Embassy was reporting was so different from our perception of what was actually going on, we seriously discussed whether or not he had lost touch with reality. We told that to a lot of people, and we worked with Phil Habib and other senior officers, trying to convince them of that. But of course they felt like they had to listen to their representative on the spot, as opposed to these midlevel officers in Washington. So I don't think our view ever prevailed, but we may have affected the situation a little bit at the margins.

Q: Was there an apparatus set before the final collapse as they were going to have a hell of a lot of people coming, are we going to do something about it.

BULLINGTON: I called for it in memos; I even came up with some numbers. A million people or more would be in immediate and grave danger with the collapse of the South Vietnamese government, people to whom we had a moral obligation. There was just a total resistance in the Embassy and the Department to, number one, accepting that it was going to happen. They would not believe that South Vietnam was about to fall. And number two, that we were obliged to do anything about these people even if it did. So that was a very, very uphill struggle. We left lots of good people behind, and we were slow in preparing to assist those who did get out, mostly on their own and with no help from us.

Q: This is one of the things that really struck me about all the touchy-feely who were concerned about our involvement in the war and all the people there, and all of a sudden when there was a real crisis, they washed their hands and went away, they washed their hands even before because once we stopped drafting college kids, the protests went down.

BULLINGTON: Absolutely. They didn't care about the South Vietnamese people. They were not their friends. I expected that of the anti-war movement. But I didn't expect it of the State Department and the Ford Administration, but that's basically the policy we got at first. Eventually they came around.

Q: Did you get involved? When the collapse came was there a moment when everybody says “It's gone?” I mean like when Da Nang fell or something like that?

BULLINGTON: Well, I had predicted in December it was coming. And so as it started, when the first province capital fell, I guess that was in February, and the South Vietnamese couldn't take it back, this to me just confirmed what I had said in my December memo, and I wrote that at the time. When Quang Tri and Hue fell, and the

best South Vietnamese units, the Marines and a big part of the Airborne and the First Division, fell along with them, that should have made it as clear as it could be to anybody knowledgeable about Vietnam that the end was at hand. But Graham Martin kept talking about how they would draw a perimeter around Saigon and the Mekong Delta and defend that and hold on. That seemed to me totally out of touch with reality.

Q: Did you get any feel for how Kissinger responded to this?

BULLINGTON: No, I never did. I never talked to him personally during that period, and I didn't know what his real feelings were. I hoped that he could see what was happening, but I just didn't know. Of course they had to deal with Congress at that level. They were getting a lot of pressure from the Congress not to do anything, to even suggest that we were going back in to save the situation.

Q: Was there, I mean was anybody passing out in the State Department at some point an alert and say 'Here it comes. It's going down the tubes and we're going to have refugees, and we're going to have this and that.' I'm talking about sort of official..

BULLINGTON: Not beyond me and Lionel and a couple of others at lower levels. There was a guy in the Agency in Saigon named Frank Snepp who was giving some of those kinds of warnings as well. But at the senior level, no. Nothing. At least that I was aware of.

Q: Craig Johnstone is the other guy. Well, when the thincollapsed, what did your working group do?

BULLINGTON: We were just trying to focus on issues like setting up the refugee camps and moving the refugees off the boats to Guam, what would happen to the Vietnamese Embassy here, the government's assets, just sweeping up the mess basically.

Q: Did you get any particular part of it?

BULLINGTON: I worked on setting up some of the refugee camps, but I was approaching the end of my tour, and that summer, a couple of months after Saigon fell on April 30th, 1975, I left.

Q: Where'd you go?

BULLINGTON: I went to Burma. I spent a few weeks in Burmese language training, just enough for the basics, and then went to Mandalay as Principal Officer.

Q: You were there from '75 to?

BULLINGTON: I was in Mandalay from '75 to '76 and then went to Rangoon, where I was chief of the political-economic section. I was there for two years, '7'78.

Q: Well let's talk about Mandalay first. What was Mandalay like?

BULLINGTON: It's not like Kipling says. (laughter) It's not where the flying fishes play, and the sun comes up like thunder out of China 'cross the bay. No, it's not like that. It's dusty and sleepy and remote. There was an Indian Consulate and an American Consulate there and that was the diplomatic community. I pretty quickly came to question why we were there. The government was basically the same as it is today, a military dictatorship, then under Ne Win. It was nasty, isolationist to the point of being hermit-like (they didn't even want tourists), anti-American, suspicious, difficult to work with. The Burmese people were great, but there wasn't much I could do in Mandalay. For a whole year I couldn't even get in to see the provincial governor. As the U.S. Consul, he wouldn't see me. Didn't want anything to do with American representatives. So, frankly I didn't do a whole heck of a lot. I learned to play tennis and tried to write a few reports on whatever I could find that was interesting, but there was not much there. I recommended that the post be closed.

Q: Well then, I take it there really wasn't any opposition you wento talk to?

BULLINGTON: Oh, no. And in fact they restricted movement, so I couldn't travel around very much. There were just a few places foreigners could go. The Burmese government was engaged in counter-insurgency operations all along the frontiers. The Burmese heartland is the Irawaddy Valley, but all along the periphery of the country are various mountain tribes, the Shan states to the east bordering Thailand and the Karen and Kachin and half a dozen other groups up along the Chinese border to the north and over to the west along the Indian border. Most of those people were not under government control and were in varying states of rebellion. Also, there were the warlord narcotics traffickers in those areas. The Burmese government didn't promote or condone the narcotics trafficking. While they didn't much give a damn about U.S. domestic narcotics problems, they did care about the narcotics traffickers because they realized that much if not most of the insurgency was financed by narcotics trafficking. So our interests, though differing, converged.

Q: Did you get involved with any, while you were in Mandalay witany anti-narcotics?

BULLINGTON: No, because there was nothing that could be done. We didn't have a good enough relationship with the Burmese government that we could work with them in Mandalay. Later, however, after I moved to Rangoon, we became very much involved with them there. At the senior level, exchanging intelligence, the Agency was active. DEA came in with a resident agent. Most importantly, we had a military assistance program giving the Burmese helicopters to go after the narcotics traffickers - from our point of view narcotics traffickers, from their point of view insurgents. They happened to be the same guys. Particularly because of my experience in Chiang Mai, I had reservations about working with this really nasty government on narcotics, particularly giving them military assistance, because once we gave it to them we didn't have the kind of relationship that would enable us to exert a lot of influence, much less control, over how it was used. I was very concerned that they would use it for things that were not in our interests, basically to go out and suppress innocent people as well as narcotics traffickers. They would go

after narcotics traffickers insofar as it so happened that they were also insurgents. But they likely would not make the distinction between people who were insurgents because of religious, political or other reasons, and those who were just criminal narcotics traffickers. They were using our equipment for all of it.

Q: Well when you were in Mandalay, what was the staff of ouconsulate there?

BULLINGTON: There was me and a vice consul and three or four FSNs. Q: I take it no visa work or?

BULLINGTON: No. I don't believe we had a single tourist the wholtime I was there. The Burmese didn't want tourists to come.

Q: Who was vice consul when you were there?

BULLINGTON: Jim Marx.

Q: How about the Indian consul, was he doing anything?

BULLINGTON: He didn't seem to have very much to do, but there was an Indian community there. Burma was part of British India, and many Indians moved to Burma during the colonial period.

Q: When you went down you were in Rangoon from '76 to '78.

BULLINGTON: Right.

Q: Who was the Ambassador when you were there?

BULLINGTON: David Osborne. And he was replaced by Maurice Bean.

Q: Well, you were what, economic?

BULLINGTON: Political-economic Counselor. We had a combined political and economic section that consisted of me and two other officers and a secretary.

Q: In Burma at that time was there anything that could be recognizeas an opposition party?

BULLINGTON: There was the insurgency, the armed opposition. Political opposition simply was not tolerated. As now, the opposition was thrown in jail.

Q: Did you have any contact there within the Burmese government?

BULLINGTON: We had some but it was rather limited. I worked with the Foreign Ministry in my job. I was also the narcotics coordinator for the Mission, so I got involved in that quite a bit. Also I spent half the time as Acting DCM. For health reasons, we had two DCMs evacuated. I was the number three guy, so I spent nearly half of my tour there as Acting DCM.

Q: I would think that DCM is responsible for the staff and all that,it sounds like there wasn't an awful lot for people to do.

BULLINGTON: Not an awful lot, it wasn't that busy. The busiest part of the Embassy's work was connected with narcotics. There was some economic work, oil exploration. One American oil company was active there. Responding to the many inquiries from the Department on human rights and trying to find out what was going on (with very limited success) took some time.

Q: Was Un-Sung....

BULLINGTON: Aungsan Su-Chi?

Q: Su-Chi, was she a presence?

BULLINGTON: She was not a presence at that time. She was nosomebody that we had ever heard of.

Q: Ne Win was the long-time ruler. Was there any feeling about whahe was after or what sort of person he was?

BULLINGTON: Oh, he was a corrupt military dictator, to sum it up. Power hungry, would not tolerate opposition, and he had a clique of military people around him who kept it that way. They were in it basically for power, not ideology.

Q: It sounds like sort of almost a sterile place, wasn't it, as faas what one could do.

BULLINGTON: Yes. We played a lot of tennis, and those who wanted to golfed. Ne Win was a great golfer, and consequently they had a couple of nice golf courses. We played tennis, we socialized, there was a fairly good-sized diplomatic community. The biggest adventure I had there was an aborted coup attempt. This was one of the times I was Acting DCM. The duty officer called about nine or ten or clock while I was at a dinner, and said that a man has appeared at the Ambassador's gate, and he's hiding in the bushes and he's asking for political asylum. So the duty officer picked me up and the two of us went to investigate. We finally induced the guy to come out of the bushes where he was hiding. He turned out to be a young Burmese army captain who had been the leader of a plot to assassinate Ne Win and overthrow the government. The plot had gone awry, and he had come to the American Ambassador's house seeking political asylum. Well, we wouldn't let him in; we couldn't really, as sorry as we felt for him. We drove him around town, got his story, and said 'hey, gee I'm sorry, but there's not much we can do for you,' and we put him out at the railroad station. He was later captured and executed. That was exciting but sad.

Q: Burma, is that part of southeast Asia?

BULLINGTON: It's on the border between south and southeast Asia, between India and Thailand. I was pleased to have served in the three most romantic sounding Consulates in Southeast Asia, Hue, Chiang Mai and Mandalay.

Q: This would be '75, I guess. I mean '78.

BULLINGTON: '78, when I finished up in Rangoon. Then the Departmensent me to the Army War College, for senior training.

Q: With Carlisle Barracks?

BULLINGTON: Carlisle Barracks. By this time I was an FSO-3 and eligible for senior training, and that turned out to be a wonderful assignment. Our children were small, and we enjoyed living on post. Moreover, the training did what it was supposed to do. I learned a lot about leadership and management and all the things that one needs for more senior positions. I just wish I'd known about a lot of it sooner. It was a delightful time, and it was a productive time in that it prepared me to be a better leader and a better senior officer.

Q: How was Vietnam playing itself out at Carlisle?

BULLINGTON: This was the generation of young military officers that I was with in Vietnam, who were now senior Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels. They had been the battalion commanders; some of the younger ones company commanders. They were suffering; the Army was suffering the hangover from the Vietnam War. They felt the Army was in deep trouble. They were dumbing down the manuals to the level of comic books, they had narcotics problems, they had recruiting problems. It was what has been called the 'hollow army.' It looked like a sound organization on the surface, but when you got inside it was empty or rotten at the core. These guys recognized that and they determined to do something about it. This was the generation of Colin Powell, and a lot of others who really turned the Army around from that time, developed some new ideas including the all-volunteer Army, and made the Army and the armed forces generally what they are today. I

thought they were talented, dedicated, decent people. I very much enjoyed getting to know them and living and working with them.

Q: This would be '79, I guess.

BULLINGTON: I graduated in 1979, yes.

Q: Whither?

BULLINGTON: I was eager to get a senior assignment, preferably a DCM job. Then (as I suppose now) DCM jobs were hard to come by. But I lobbied for it, came down to Washington. There wasn't anything available in my 'home' East Asia bureau, where I'd had all my geographic experience. So if I was going to be a DCM it had to be somewhere else. The opportunities were much greater in Africa than anywhere else, and that's indeed what turned up, Chad. At this point Chad was in the midst of a civil war, which had been ongoing to some degree ever since independence in 1962. It was in a particularly heated phase at that time. It had been at first between the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south, but by this time the Muslim north had by and large won that struggle and had chased all the Christians out of the north, including the capital, N'djamena. However, various factions of the Arabized, Muslim north were now fighting among themselves. The two principal ones were called the Forces Arm#es Populaires (or FAP) under Goukouni Oueddai, and the Forces Arm#es du Nord (or FAN) of Hissen Habr#. They had reached a very unstable cease-fire, and the two principal factions along with a couple of smaller factions had formed a so-called coalition government in N'djamena. However, it was just an armed standoff, and the government was not real. By this point, mid '79, we had evacuated dependents and closed the Peace Corps program, but we still had the core staff of the Embassy there. We were in between Ambassadors, so when I was sent there as DCM I immediately became Charg#. This was a big responsibility for a brand-new DCM who had never been in the country or even in Africa. I did the best I could. Eventually, after about four months, we got an Ambassador.

Q: Who was that?

BULLINGTON: Don Norland.

Q: Well now, when you went out there as charge', who was there ttalk to in the government?

BULLINGTON: There were plenty of people to talk to, but there was no government. You could talk to one faction and they'd tell you one thing and another faction would tell you the opposite. The Minister of Health was illiterate. It was that kind of government, just warlords and their lieutenants. They were backed by their militia armies occupying different parts of the capital. These armies included lots of twelve and fourteen year old kids with AK-47's. They also had some heavier weapons, mortars and the like. They had nominally formed a coalition government, but it was as close to anarchy as you could get.

Q: Well now was Qadhafi playing games?

BULLINGTON: Yes. Qadhafi had at one time or another supported all of the different factions and was very much involved in the civil war, stirring things up.

Q: What were American interests there?

BULLINGTON: Very few that I could discern. We were interested in what Qadhafi was up to. Also, this was before the Cold War was over, and we still had Russians and Chinese and others to worry about there. Chad had even then been talked about as a potential source of oil. Subsequently they found some, and they're now producing oil there. But other than that, few American interests. The French were Chad's principal patron. They had an airbase just outside of N'djamena, secured by a battalion of the Foreign Legion, and they were the main players there politically and economically. We had a fairly substantial Embassy, but not as big as the French.

Q: What was our relationship at that point with the French there?

BULLINGTON: Pretty good. We didn't have any serious issues with them. I would describe relations as good if not cordial. We worked together well, had no conflicts.

Q: But I suppose also you saw them as being a refuge, a source ostability or something?

BULLINGTON: Yes, we really looked to them to help in emergencies, and in fact that's what eventually happened. In the spring of 1980 the government, such as it was, totally collapsed and war broke out again, right in the middle of town, between the two major factions, Goukouni and Habr#. As we reported, the FAP had hit the FAN. There was heavy firing all over town. They weren't after foreigners, but we were right in the middle of it. Most of the fighters were these 14-year-old kids with AK-47s, not trained, not disciplined. Also, they were firing mortars and 'Stalin organs,' World War II era rocket launchers they had gotten from the Russians by way of the Libyans, which are very much an area weapon. You aim it at a city in general, and it may hit that if you're lucky. So this stuff was falling all around and we were in pretty dire straits for awhile. It certainly was dangerous. This is where my experience in Vietnam proved very helpful. Basically that's why I got the job, because they knew that this sort of thing was possible, and they wanted somebody who knew something about being in war and had proved that they don't panic under fire. That's indeed what was needed. I was able to help a lot of people who had not had that kind of experience to do the right thing, that is, to tell them you don't run out in the street and try to get away from it. With mortar shells and gunfire coming in you get in a corner with strong walls and cover yourself up and chances are you're going to get through it. So I was constantly on the emergency radio, and was able to calm several people who might have done dangerous things otherwise. We were able to get through the fighting without losing anybody. This went on for three or four days before the French and we could arrange a temporary cease-fire so foreigners could move out from town to the French airbase. We got there safely, and the next day the French flew us out to Douala.

Q: Douala is in...?

BULLINGTON: Cameroon.

Q: Cameroon. In a way we just ceased relations, suspend relationwith the government there?

BULLINGTON: There was no government to relate to. There were just these armed factions at that point. And we had to abandon the Embassy. In those years we didn't have Marine guards in all embassies, and Chad was one where we didn't in spite of the danger there. The Embassy was right in the area between the two opposing forces. The fighting broke out late at night, around midnight, so nobody was in the Embassy at the time. We knew things were dangerous so we didn't have but one drawer of classified material, but we had code equipment there. The Department wanted us to go back in and destroy it, but the Embassy was right in the middle of the fighting. We couldn't go there without seriously risking someone's life. This became even more evident when we talked to the Defense Attach#, an enterprising young lieutenant colonel, whom DIA had tasked with getting some ordnance that the Libyans had given the Chadian forces. He had been able to collect some artillery shells, and had assembled them in his office in the Embassy, thus turning it into an ammo dump. He had not told either me or the Ambassador that he had done this, so when we started talking about possibly going back to retrieve the classified material and destroy it, he said 'Well, there's something you should know. If one of those mortar shells hits in the right place, that whole Embassy is going to blow up.' So we didn't go back.

Q: How long were you in, where was it, Jalalabad?

BULLINGTON: Douala.

Q: How long were you there?

BULLINGTON: Long enough so they could give me a passport, some moneand a ticket to get on the plane to come home. Maybe two days.

Q: So you just abandoned the place?

BULLINGTON: Yes. It's all we could do. The Agency sent some people back to hover on the border to try to get back in as soon as they could to destroy the classified material. Eventually they did get back, but it took at least two or three months. Until the fighting died down, there was just no way you could get there without military intervention.

Q: What was the end result of the fighting?

BULLINGTON: The end result was eventually a victory by Habr# and his FAN faction. He took over as President but didn't do a good job. He's currently being hunted for human rights violations but has been given asylum somewhere. Chad remained unstable for several more years.

Q: Did you ever go back?

BULLINGTON: No. Lost all my household effects there, everything,just had to abandon it. The Embassy wasn't re-opened for a long time.

Q: Was your wife with you...?

BULLINGTON: No. Even before I got there dependents had been evacuated, and consequently my wife and our two daughters in elementary school stayed behind in Washington.

Q: When you came back, what did they do with you? You went outhere in '70...

BULLINGTON: In the summer of '79, and came back in late spring of '80. They gave me a nice post, perhaps as a reward for my being in danger so much from Vietnam and

now surviving another war in Chad. I went to Benin, which many people wouldn't think of as a reward I guess, but the job was as Chief of Mission and Permanent Charg#. It was the same as being Ambassador, but without the title. Three or four years before we had downgraded the level of our representation from Ambassador to Charg#, because the government was so nasty and hostile. It was run by Matthew Kerekou, a former sergeant in the French colonial forces who had successfully mounted a military coup. At that time he was in his rabid Marxist-Leninist phase and was very anti-American. He had all kinds of Russians and Chinese and North Koreans and Cubans and Libyans around. He subsequently became a militant Islamist for a few years, and then mutated into a born-again Christian, his latest persona. Currently he's again the President.

Q: Well you were there for how long?

BULLINGTON: Two years. Q: In Benin?

BULLINGTON: In Benin.

Q: Again, what did you do?

BULLINGTON: In spite of poor U.S.-Benin relations, we still had a Peace Corps program, but we didn't have any foreign aid program. There were a few American citizens around to take care of. There was oil exploration off the coast, and in fact they found some. But there was not an awful lot you could do with that government other than to try to stay out of its way. We were not entirely successful in that regard, unfortunately. Toward the end of my tour, in late '81, we had another interesting adventure. Cotonou was a small Embassy, with only one communicator. At this particular time our generator needed some maintenance. The centralized maintenance facility was in Monrovia, so we had a generator repairman from Monrovia come in. He arrived on Thanksgiving Day. Our communicator met him and the two of them went off that evening to a Thanksgiving dinner that some other Americans had organized. On their way home that night, about 9 p.m., they took a wrong turn on a dark, unmarked road into what turned out to be a Beninese

military base. When they approached, the gate guards did not say 'Halt, who goes there?' but simply started firing their AK-47's. They shot up the car pretty badly, and wounded our communicator. His ankle was basically destroyed. They took him to the hospital and put the generator repairman in jail, even though he had a diplomatic passport. He had all his generator repair tools in the car, so the Beninese said, 'Oh, we're sure this guy's a spy, coming in to do nefarious things at our military base, and we caught him red-handed.' The most immediate problem was that with our one communicator shot and in the hospital we could not communicate because he was the only one who knew the code to get into the communications vault to operate the equipment. We had a Collins KWM-2 radio outside the vault for emergency communications and we called on that, but nobody was listening. Lagos, less than a hundred miles away, about a two-hour drive, was our backup facility for emergencies. It was a big Embassy, but for some reason they didn't turn their KWM-2 on that evening, so we couldn't communicate with them. I'm a ham radio operator, and because I was Charg#, I had been able to talk the Beninese government into giving me a license. I'd set up a good ham radio station in the Ambassador's residence, where we were living. So when we couldn't communicate from the Embassy I went home and got on the ham radio. I contacted a ham in New York and had him call the State Department operations center and tell them our situation, that our communicator was shot and the generator repairman from Monrovia was in jail, and please first thing tomorrow morning have Embassy Lagos send us a doctor and a communicator. This worked, and the message went right through. So early the next morning the doctor, a senior officer from the Agency who was looking after the communicator, and a new communicator arrived. The doctor and the Agency man went into the hospital and managed to spirit our communicator out under the noses of the Beninese, who weren't guarding him very carefully. (We often called Benin a police state poorly policed.) They took him back across the border to Lagos, and were able to save his foot, which the Beninese doctors had been on the point of amputating. But the government kept the generator repairman in jail, and it was over two months before we finally got him out. This was 1981 and early '82, very close on the heels of the Iranian hostage crisis, and we were very sensitive at that time to nasty governments

putting Americans with diplomatic passports in jail. But we didn't want to publicize the incident and kept it out of the press, because we knew if it became public that would cause lots of complications and likely make it harder to get our man released.

Q: And of course the state, I mean one of your provinces was such a small state, that you know a military action against it would not have been precluded. Which is not a good idea.

BULLINGTON: No, we didn't want to take that path. We wanted to use diplomatic means to get him out. We tried everything. We got the local Ambassadors to make a demarche on our behalf, and we got the UN representatives in Benin to do the same. In Benin the French were by far the most influential. So eventually the Department enlisted French President Francois Mitterrand to call President Kerekou directly. Mitterrand persuaded him to let our generator repairman go. That was an interesting adventure for me, perhaps less so for the communicator and generator repairman.

Q: I take it you didn't get your generator fixed.

BULLINGTON: No, not right away. By that time I was approaching thend of my tour.

Q: Did you find much contact with the people of Benin?

BULLINGTON: The people were friendly, but the government was snasty that it limited the amount of contact we could have.

Q: I take it there's no real political reporting to be done oanything like that?

BULLINGTON: I could do quite a bit. As I said, it was a police state poorly policed. There were a lot of people that you could talk to, a lot of information that one could develop, and it was possible to travel.

Q: Around Benin...

BULLINGTON: Around it?

Q: Bounded, what, to the South was...

BULLINGTON: Nigeria.

Q: Nigeria. To the north...

BULLINGTON: To the north is Niger and Burkina Faso, and to the wesis Togo.

Q: Togo. Were there any problems with these states?

BULLINGTON: Not really, no. Benin served as a vast entrepot for smuggling into Nigeria. We benefitted from that. You could buy Johnnie Walker scotch for three dollars a bottle. Luxury goods of all sorts were legally imported into Benin to be smuggled into Nigeria, where at least some people had lots of money to spend on them.

Q: One thinks of the Benin bronzes.

BULLINGTON: No, that's the Benin state of Nigeria. Benin, the country, was the former Dahomey, under the French, a part of French West Africa.

Q: How about tribal problems, any?

BULLINGTON: Benin is so fractured that there weren't any major ones. In that tiny country of perhaps three million people, there are something like twenty different ethnic groups, and none of them dominant. So they have to get along one way or another if they're going to have a government at all.

Q: Were they a trading people?

BULLINGTON: Not particularly.

Q: Because some of these smaller countries end up either producing traders up and down the coast or good clerks or something...

BULLINGTON: The Beninese were regarded as the intellectuals of French West Africa. A lot of them had relatively more education and served in the colonial civil service as clerks and teachers.

Q: How about again, was this a place where the French were dominant?

BULLINGTON: Very much, yes.

Q: Did we sort of keep out of it, were they looking at ususpiciously, the French?

BULLINGTON: Not at that point. We got along quite well with the French and didn't have any real problems. I sent my two daughters to the French school there, since there was no American school. The school at first wouldn't let them in because they didn't speak French. I went to the French Ambassador, and he was nice enough to intervene and cause them to be admitted.

Q: How did they find that?

BULLINGTON: They were in the second and third grade at that point, and it was traumatic for a few weeks, but only a few weeks. Within five, six weeks they were speaking French pretty well, and after three or four months they were speaking like little French girls.

Q: Did social life, was there much social life?

BULLINGTON: Within the diplomatic corps there was. There was little other entertainment. Some of the Beninese would occasionally join us. As Chief of Mission I was obliged to give the Fourth of July receptions and other official functions. Tuy-Cam and I enjoyed doing that at first, but it was a lot of work.

Q: Did the Cold War intrude at all there?

BULLINGTON: Not much. We got along well with the Russians there.

Q: The Soviets in those days.

BULLINGTON: The Soviets in those days, yes. And with the Chinese. The only people we didn't get along with were the North Koreans. They had an Embassy there, and they were just nasty. They would turn away when they saw me coming. I didn't want anything to do with them either.

Q: But our interests there were...

BULLINGTON: Minimal.

Q: Minimal.

BULLINGTON: In fact toward the end of my tour the Beninese government told us to relocate the Ambassador's residence and the Embassy to a diplomatic compound where they wanted all of the Embassies to relocate, better to keep control over them. Because of Tehran and other Embassy security problems we had already had the Inman report and imposed greatly increased security requirements. To build a new Embassy, the security for it has to be such that it becomes an enormous and very expensive undertaking. We had a preliminary survey team come out, and they concluded it would cost something like five million dollars to build a suitable Embassy and Ambassador's residence where the Beninese wanted us to put them. These would have been the grandest buildings in town. My recommendation was that we simply close down rather than do that, because in my opinion our interests in Benin did not justify that kind of expense and having that kind of Mission there, particularly with all the ongoing costs of operating and protecting it. It never came to that, because the government backed down and didn't make us move.

Q: Were you beginning to be part of the African Mafia by this time?

BULLINGTON: Yes.

Q: I would think that, you know, there are a lot of these Embassiethat one could shut down.

BULLINGTON: Yes.

Q: But it would mean no more Ambassadorial ranks for the Africacorps, you know. It's a potential problem.

BULLINGTON: My closure recommendation was not taken well, I think, in the Africa Bureau. But the only effective counter-argument I ever heard was that the Congress, specifically the Black Caucus, will not let us close. I think that's probably still the case.

Q: Anybody, any visits from anybody?

BULLINGTON: We did have the Pope come. I lined up on the airport tarmac to greet him along with the rest of the diplomatic corps. No senior visits from the U.S.

Q: So you got out of there in what, '82?

BULLINGTON: '82.

Q: '82. Then what?

BULLINGTON: Then I got my Ambassadorship, in title as well as in substance. I was named Ambassador to Burundi. But that was a long, drawn out process. We left Cotonou in August of '82. After a couple weeks leave I went to New York to wait out the confirmation process. I was assigned to the U.S. Mission to the UN as senior advisor on Africa in the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly.

Q: This would be general assembly of '82?

BULLINGTON: Yes, the General Assembly that began in early September. I stayed there all fall, waiting for the Senate to get around to acting on my Ambassadorial nomination.

Q: Let's talk a little about your experience in the UN. The African bloc of course is very large, and worldwide has to be quite important. Did you find there was really, I mean was there a unit? Was there an African bloc?

BULLINGTON: Oh, yes. They got together and consulted, both formally and informally. On some things they voted as a bloc; on other things you could separate a few off. On many issues a lot of them didn't really care very much. It all depended on the issue.

Q: What sort of issues were you getting involved with?

BULLINGTON: To tell the truth, I didn't think that many of the issues that I got involved with were very important. This was still the Cold War, still the standoff with the Soviets. And the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, was a great hall of the winds. There was a lot of talk and very little action. The bureaucracy was just awful. The thing they were most exercised about in that General Assembly, it seemed, was a plan to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of America by Christopher Columbus. The Nordics got all excited, and said 'Hell, he didn't discover it at all; it's Lief Erikson we should be honoring.' And then the South Americans said 'All he did was come over and start exploiting the poor Indians.' The Italians and Spanish championed their man. And that debate went on and on. They were taking this seriously.

Q: Did you have any problems going out to Burundi?

BULLINGTON: No, it just took time. The General Assembly was over in late December, but my Senate hearing still hadn't been scheduled. So the Department sent me to the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville for a leadership course. The course was

really good, but I'd had much the same training at the Army War College, so for me it was just a reinforcement of what I had already learned. I finally got the call from President Reagan there at the Federal Executive Institute. I was in a class with some 50 other federal executives, when the secretary from the Director's office came into the classroom and said 'Mr. Bullington has a call from the President.' All these feds definitely took notice. (laughter) So I went out to take the call, and it really was President Reagan. He always called new Ambassadors personally. He said 'I want you to be my Ambassador to Burundi.' When I walked back into that classroom, silence fell. The professor said 'Well, who was it? What kind of joke was this?' 'It was President Reagan,' I replied. 'What did he want?' 'He asked me to be his Ambassador to Burundi.' Then everyone cheered. That was a fun moment.

Q: Yes, this is sort of not always standard, but you get this. Buit never happens to the rest of the government.

BULLINGTON: No, I don't think it did. They were all amazed. became the class celebrity.

Q: You went out there when?

BULLINGTON: It was April or May of '83. We got there in time to do the Fourth of July reception.

Q: Of '83.

BULLINGTON: '83.

Q: And you were there how long?

BULLINGTON: Until after the Fourth of July reception in '86.

Q: Bad timing.

BULLINGTON: I couldn't avoid that.

Q: Well, in the first place, I've got a map in my eyes, Burundi ithe lower or upper one?

BULLINGTON: It's the lower one.

Q: Lower one. Rwanda, Burundi are always going together.

BULLINGTON: They're twins.

Q: Lower one. What was the situation in Burundi when you went there?

BULLINGTON: It was difficult. Burundi and Rwanda are truly twins. They're about the same size; they were both former Belgian territories, League of Nations mandates. They were originally colonized by the Germans in the 1890s, but they were awarded to the Belgians after World War I, under the League of Nations. They both have the same ethnic makeup, about 75-80% Hutu, and about 15-18% Tutsi, with a few other sorts of people. The conflict has been between the Tutsis and the Hutus. Long before the Germans came, both Rwanda and Burundi had been Tutsi-ruled kingdoms in more or less the current geographic boundaries of what is now Rwanda and what is now Burundi. So this is not one of the many cases in Africa where the white colonialists came in and drew stupid boundaries and got different ethnic groups all mixed up. It was that way when the Europeans got there - two Tutsi-ruled kingdoms in what is now Rwanda and Burundi. When the Belgians were forced to give them independence in 1962 they took different paths. In Rwanda the majority Hutus took over and proceeded to persecute the Tutsis. In Burundi just the opposite happened. The minority Tutsis were able to maintain themselves in power and proceeded to do nasty things to the Hutus, denying them access to education and all positions of power. In 1976 there was a Hutu uprising in Burundi that was viciously suppressed in what amounted to a genocide. It was not quite on the scale of what happened in Rwanda in 1994, but still tens of thousands of Hutus were slaughtered after they had unsuccessfully tried to overthrow the government. It was said that the Tutsis

either killed or forced to flee the country every Hutu with more than an elementary school education. As time went on each of these situations played off the other. In Burundi the Tutsis could say 'See, see Rwanda, what has happened there, what they have done to the Tutsis, and how nasty they've been. That's what will happen to us if these guys ever get power here.' Same thing in Rwanda. They said 'See, see these Tutsis in Burundi, what they did to our brethren there. That's what they will do to us if we give them half a chance.' So the two problems reinforced each other. In 1983, when I got there, Burundi was fairly calm, but it was only a calm imposed by the Tutsi military government. They held all the important levers of power, most importantly the Army. There were no Hutu army officers, none. There were no Hutus, except a few tame ones they had co-opted, at any significant level of government. The Tutsis ran things, keeping the country quiet, but suppressed. The government was paranoid. They saw enemies everywhere, particularly Europeans and Americans. They saw us as people who wanted to come in and organize the Hutus in a rebellion that would overthrow them. Harassment and expulsion of missionaries was one of the things that I dealt with from the beginning. There were still twenty or thirty American missionaries as well as a lot of European missionaries.

Q: The Americans were mostly Protestant.

BULLINGTON: The Americans were all Protestant. The Europeans were almost all Catholic. But both groups were equally mistrusted as foreign agents who were working to support and educate the Hutus who would eventually rise up and overthrow the Tutsi government. So the government didn't like missionaries, and they were suspicious of the countries from whence the missionaries came. They were suspicious of almost anything we did. We had an AID mission there. For a rural road construction project, AID had shipped in several boxes of machetes, to clear brush along the road. The government seized those machetes, and said 'This is obviously something you're planning to hand out to the Hutus to come and slaughter us!' It was paranoia. They were constantly harassing and expelling the missionaries. One of my closest allies became the Papal Nuncio. I worked with him to try to moderate such problems. The biggest crisis we had, however,

was over our diplomatic pouches. The American government, unlike any other as far as I can tell, allows its personnel to use the diplomatic pouch for personal mail, including packages. Consequently the American pouches are physically bigger and more numerous than any other country's. This has been going on for a long time, but one particular pouch shipment came in that was especially huge. There were thirty large diplomatic pouch bags addressed to the U.S. Embassy. Because of their paranoia the Burundi government seized them and wouldn't let them out of the airport. They said 'This is surely a shipment of arms to arm the Hutus and overthrow us.' This led to a serious confrontation that lasted several months. We had no idea what was in those pouches. And the State Department couldn't tell us what was in them. They just came through the U.S. mail. Nobody had opened the boxes they contained. Nobody knew what was in those pouches.

Q: Was anybody in your Embassy waiting for something?

BULLINGTON: Not that we knew of. No one had ordered any personal mail of that bulk. But it was not only those particular pouches; they then blocked all the subsequent ones that came in. So that stopped both our official pouch mail and our personal mail. This was just before Christmas, November of 1985. So nobody got Christmas presents for the kids and other things we'd ordered. This went on for about three months. We didn't even get the checks that were in the pouches that were needed to pay the rents for our housing and salaries for our local employees. We didn't get medical supplies. We didn't get all these things that normally come through the pouch. This made it very difficult to operate the Embassy. Also, there's an important principle involved, the inviolability of diplomatic pouches, which could have repercussions far beyond Burundi. I was doing everything I could to try to get a resolution, but the government wouldn't budge. Finally, I wanted to begin gradually shutting down the Embassy, to say 'Ok, we can't pay our rents, we can't pay our salaries, we have to start laying people off, and eventually we'll just close up and go home.' I didn't think our interests in Burundi were important enough to justify caving in on the principle of inviolability of diplomatic pouches. The Africa Bureau took another view and said no, we should try to accommodate them, don't make any threats, just stick

it out and eventually the problem will go away. Some parts of the Department whose interests were more focused on pouches and diplomatic procedures and the precedential implications of the situation seemed to share my view, but my instructions came from the Africa Bureau. They said no, don't do anything, just live with it. After three months I decided we couldn't live with it much longer, and we ought to do something one way or another. By interpreting my instructions, let's say, very liberally, the solution I came up with was to invite the Foreign Ministry to send their people into the Embassy along with the pouches that were at issue, and observe us as we opened them. I didn't know what was in them, but I knew damn well it was not arms or anything else that the government of Burundi had any legitimate reason to be concerned about. Whether or not the Department would have approved this procedure I'll never know, but anyway we did it. The pouches were opened and the contents turned out to be seeds addressed to Peace Corps. The Peace Corps director had gotten an offer from an American seed company that said 'we have some seeds we'd like to give to Peace Corps Volunteers to plant.' She thought she was ordering these little packages of seeds that you get at hardware stores. Instead of little packages, they were gross lots of five hundred packages. So that's what caused the diplomatic confrontation, pounds and pounds of Peace Corps seeds. Although the problem was solved, I don't think the Africa Bureau much liked me for resisting their instructions just to do nothing and wait it out.

Q: Did you have much contact with Rwanda, our Embassy in Rwanda?

BULLINGTON: To some extent. I visited John Blaine, our Ambassador there, during the first part of my tour. But it wasn't a daily kind of thing.

Q: Given the history of those places, one would almost be taking the temperature every day of the Hutu-Tutsi relationship, was it sort of known that at any time this could blow up?

BULLINGTON: We were concerned about it because in Burundi it had blown up less than ten years previously, in 1976, in a terrible massacre. We knew it could happen, but the

government had been successful in keeping the Hutus so suppressed that there was no visible internal threat at that time. There were Hutu opposition movements based in Brussels and across Lake Tanganyika in eastern Congo, Zaire at that time. But they weren't really doing anything inside the country. There was no significant fighting at the time I was there, but it was always a potential.

Q: Was there at that time a Hutu educated class and all?

BULLINGTON: No, they had wiped it out in 1976, and didn't permit any more Hutus to get advanced educations or to rise to leadership positions. Almost all educated Hutus were outside Burundi.

Q: Well this must have put quite a crimp on the missionaries didn'it? I mean did you find yourself having to sit on the missionaries?

BULLINGTON: We tried to intervene on their behalf with the government, to keep the government from expelling them and doing nasty things to them. The Seventh Day Adventists were one of the groups that were active there. My cook was a Seventh Day Adventist. He had been the cook for previous Ambassadors for several years. The government had a corv#e labor system, inherited from colonial days, where they would assemble people supposedly on a voluntary basis, but basically they just rounded them up, and made them do things like repair roads. Saturday was the appointed day for this communal labor. This poses a problem for faithful Adventists, who are not supposed to work on their Sabbath. They refused to do the Saturday labor, but they offered to do it on Sunday or some other day. Since they were all Hutus, the government wouldn't accept this and threw the Adventist leaders in jail. They also jailed my cook. This was during one of the times we'd been having some controversy with the government, about the pouches among other things, and I was pretty well convinced that they had picked on him because he was my cook. He was not a minister; he was not a leader of the Adventists. There were thirty, forty thousand Adventists in the country and yet they only put forty or

fifty of them in jail, but he was one of them. I think that they did it because he was the American Ambassador's cook. 'We'll show you Americans, you can't mess with us.' Jail is not a nice place to be in Burundi, especially for doing nothing but maintaining one's religious faith. I was trying to get him out. This was near the end of my tour, and I wanted to make a personal appeal to the President during my farewell call on him. When I told the Department this, the Department hemmed and hawed and eventually told me no, don't do it. Their stated reasoning was that this would be unfair, that we couldn't get all the Adventists out of jail so we shouldn't intervene on behalf of my cook. That infuriated me.

Q: It's nice when you don't ask.

BULLINGTON: Right. In hindsight I would not have. But I thought it was so automatic, I was just submitting the list of the things I would be reviewing with the President on my farewell call, and on the list was an appeal to release my cook. I never imagined that there would be a problem with it. I told them that this was a very curious moral position, to say that because we cannot save everyone we will therefore save no one.

Q: Sounds like the lawyers got into it.

BULLINGTON: Yes, probably. The decision came to me from the Africa Bureau. I wrote some, let's say, rather heated remonstrances. Finally, after considerable discussion, I did what I felt was the right thing, appealed to the President, and got my cook out of jail.

Q: Well now, who was the President of Burundi?

BULLINGTON: Jean-Baptiste Bagaza. The year after I left he was overthrown in a military coup by the current President, whose name I can't recall.

Q: It'll come. But what was your impression of, what were ourelations with the government, could you talk to them?

BULLINGTON: You could talk to them, but not very productively. They were so suspicious, literally to the point of paranoia. They saw us as wanting to overthrow them when we didn't. We didn't much like this government, but we certainly weren't plotting to overthrow them or arm Hutus or anything remotely approaching that.

Q: Were there any other countries, how about the role of thBelgians, was it all a role or?

BULLINGTON: They were a major influence there, as were the French.Certainly economically, they provided more aid than we did.

Q: Did you feel they were at all fishing in troubled waters?

BULLINGTON: The French or Belgians? No, not really. They would have liked to the extent possible to see some improvements in human rights, but no country was working to bring that about in the sense of trying to overthrow the government.

Q: At that time, was there concerns about the growth of populatiothen?

BULLINGTON: Burundi and Rwanda are the two most densely populated countries in Africa. It was obvious, at least to me, that there was no way they could accommodate the kind of population growth they were experiencing and have any hope of achieving economic development.

Q: Were we able to do anything, did we have anything on birtcontrol or anything of that nature?

BULLINGTON: No, we didn't. Others did, some UN agencies and NGOs,but we were not active in that.

Q: Did we have any aid going on there? BULLINGTON: I expect we do now.

Q: But at that time...

BULLINGTON: At that time? Yes, we had a small AID mission. I looked at the AID mission and discovered that the total amount of assistance it was dispersing was on the level of a million dollars per year, a very small amount. To maintain that AID mission with its staff and overhead was costing well over a million dollars a year. This did not make sense to me, and I recommended that it be closed. The Department didn't want to do that.

Q: Well this is often, we talk about the AID money we're giving to country, and yet we throw in the cost of the AID mission.

BULLINGTON: Particularly when it's tiny like that you're spending more on housing and staff than actual money going to economic development.

Q: What about tourism?

BULLINGTON: No. None.

Q: The mountain gorillas were up in Rwanda.

BULLINGTON: In Rwanda, yes. There are no wild animals left in Burundi, because it's so densely populated. There's not a lot to see there. It's a beautiful country, though, with one of the best climates in the world. Lake Tanganyika is there, a beautiful lake. Lots of mountains. But it's so densely populated that unless you like seeing a lot of little bean fields and rural huts, there's not much there for tourists.

Q: Any problems from Tanganyika or Zaire?

BULLINGTON: Right across the lake is Kivu province of Zaire. It was as always very unstable. There was all sorts of banditry and very little government control, but it didn't really spill over into Burundi when I was there.

Q: You left there in '86. The massacres occurred on your watch.Where did you go then?

BULLINGTON: Then I was sent back to Washington. I didn't get much of a job. The Africa Bureau didn't seem to want to take care of me. The only job I could get was as Associate Dean of the Senior Seminar. At that time the Dean was Jane Coon, a really nice lady. She wore two hats, one as head of the School of Professional Studies at FSI, and the other as Dean of the Senior Seminar. As Associate Dean, having been an Ambassador, for me it was like being cast into the wilderness. As it turned out, however, Jane didn't really want to do both jobs, and she was more than fully occupied as head of the School of Professional Studies, so she left the running of the Senior Seminar almost totally to me. Then the next year on her recommendation they made me the Dean.

Q: So you did that from '86 to...

BULLINGTON: '89.

Q: '89. I was in the senior seminar back a ways, '74 or '75, but I think the thing that struck me, I thought the senior seminar was very good, really enjoyed it, getting to see the United States, but one thing that did strike me was that the military officers who were sent there, fine people and all, but this was sort of a throwaway, this was sort of the end of their careers, so it wasn't as though you were meeting with future admirals or something, they were all off at the war college, at least in my time.

BULLINGTON: I didn't have that impression. A few of the military officers during my tenure there went on to become generals and admirals. I changed the Senior Seminar pretty dramatically. Before it was more like a graduate course. You had great field trips, but you had to do a research paper, which was much like a master's thesis. And the curriculum was all policy oriented as opposed to leadership and management training. I made a few changes the first year, but since I was only the Deputy, there was not much I could do. But the second year I made some big changes, not only because I wanted to, but also because Charlie Bray came in as Director of FSI, and he was really enthusiastic about leadership training. He gave me a mandate to redesign the curriculum between the first

and second year. That summer one of the students in the previous seminar, Jim Purcell, a very senior Civil Service officer in the Department, was assigned to assist me in coming up with an entirely new curriculum. We went to the Army War College, the National War College, the Federal Executive Institute, the Kennedy School of Government, and to business training programs and looked at what they were doing in terms of executive training. We basically threw out the old curriculum and redesigned it from scratch, with a focus on leadership. We even put in ropes courses.

Q: What's the ropes?

BULLINGTON: It's a leadership training and teambuilding technique where you learn through physical exercises involving ropes and obstacles. Another element I put in was wellness. I had a professional trainer come in to do a fitness program and nutrition counseling. We had MED do cholesterol tests. The students were all forty-ish people who were getting to the age where you can have heart attacks, and you need to take care of yourself. That's a fundamental element of good leadership. You can't do much unless you're healthy.

Q: You were saying you got rid of the papers and put in projects.

BULLINGTON: The projects could be an activity, for example working on Capitol Hill in a Senator's officer for a month. Visiting and studying conservation in a national park. Working with a police department on security. Working in state or local government. The students had a whole month to do a project they picked. Then they would do a report and the group discussed it. I also put in an element of community service during the week of Thanksgiving. Instead of just studying about poverty, with some experts to come in to talk about it, I sent all the students out to work in a homeless shelter or a soup kitchen for a week, or some similar activity, and then come back and discuss the experience. We stressed experiential learning as opposed to academic learning. We continued the field trips, which I thought were very good. But just about everything else was dramatically

changed. It worked out well, everybody liked it. I also had the students design most of the curriculum. I designed the program for the first month, while the students got together in committees to decide what the seminar was going to study for the next eight months. Whether we're going to study X instead of Y, whether we're going to place A or place B, they decided. When the students decide, they take ownership of the decision. It's much more effective than just directing them to do this or that. Particularly at the senior level, when you have people with lots of experience who know what they need and want to learn, it's much better to let them decide rather than for anyone to tell them what they're going to do. That worked very well. As I understand it, the curriculum has evolved, but it is basically that kind of curriculum that is still in place in the Senior Seminar.

Q: Excellent. Well then by this time we moved up to '89 I guess.What happened?

BULLINGTON: The Department told me I was no longer needed, at the age of 48. While I was Ambassador I had been promoted to Minister-Counselor. At that time you had three years to be promoted from Minister-Counselor to Career Minister or be 'selected out,' (the euphemism then in use); or you could be given what was called a 'limited career extension.'

Q: Now did you think you'd aroused animosity by saying 'why don'you close' this type... I mean you weren't a team player.

BULLINGTON: I was not beloved in the Africa Bureau I guess, which by that time was my home bureau. Training assignments then, and I expect even now (although Colin Powell's doing his best to change it), were not career enhancing assignments. So even though I'd done, I think, an unusually important job in changing the Senior Seminar so fundamentally, and that was recognized at FSI, it was not recognized anywhere else in the Department. Training has long been regarded by the Foreign Service as where you shuffle people off when you've got nothing better for them to do. So I didn't get much recognition for the

Senior Seminar job. I was not even offered a limited career extension, and I was forcibly retired at the ripe old age of 48.

Q: Good god. Now when does that, what did that do, that really huryour pension didn't it, or not?

BULLINGTON: No. I had twenty-seven years of service. I came in right out of college, when I was barely 22. So I managed to get in almost 27 years of service; but still, forty-eight is too young to be put out to pasture.

Q: Well, sort of going to pasture, what did you do?

BULLINGTON: I got a job as Director of International Affairs for the city of Dallas, which turned out to be a good job. In terms of money it was great, since they were paying me about what I had been making as an FSO, plus I was drawing a Foreign Service pension. This was a job that the mayor and the business leadership had created to try to internationalize Dallas, the better to compete with the likes of Atlanta and Houston. It was a bit like a municipal foreign ministry, if you can imagine such. I was among other things chief of protocol for the city, welcoming foreign guests and arranging the mayor's foreign trips. We made several trips to Russia, Israel, Mexico, Europe. The mayor at the time was Annette Strauss, the sister-in-law of Bob Strauss, the Democratic Party power broker and former U.S. Trade Commissioner. She was a wonderful lady to work for, and we I got along well. I was also working with the business leadership of the city, the oil money, and others in the Dallas establishment. Texas Instruments, Halliburton, J. C. Penney, Exxon-Mobil, all those big companies. We were trying to promote international trade, attract foreign investment and do the things necessary to attract it. For example, we worked with a French lady to start a French school in Dallas, with French government support, so that Europeans coming to Dallas could have an alternative to the American school system. We facilitated cultural exchanges, assisted sister cities groups, worked with the local consular corps, tried to get countries to open new consulates in Dallas. I also

got involved with NAFTA, which was being negotiated at the time. We wanted to position Dallas as a lead player in NAFTA. I went to Washington along with the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and we persuaded the U.S. trade negotiators to bring one of the main NAFTA negotiating sessions to Dallas. Eventually they put one of the organizations created by NAFTA in Dallas. This was an excellent job for a retired FSO.

Q: You did that from...

BULLINGTON: From '89 to '93. In '92 there was an election and a new mayor came in replacing Annette. He didn't focus on international affairs the way she had. We got along fine, but he just wasn't very interested in international activities. Also a new city manager came in who also was not internationally inclined. At the same time a friend who had been the Senior Vice President of the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas, whom I'd worked with on several projects, retired from the FED to become Dean of the College of Business and Public Administration at Old Dominion University in Norfolk. He called and asked if I would be interested in applying for a job he was creating there, directing a center for global business in the college. Norfolk being a seaport, with the biggest navy base in the world, having that kind of organization in the principal university in the city seemed to make sense. I'd always wanted to work in a University, teach a course or two and do international activities. I thought this was a great opportunity, so I went to Norfolk. Unfortunately, the Dean, between the time he recruited me and the time I got there, had a fight with the faculty about creating new international programs, and they finally rose up against him. University faculties, I soon discovered, are the most conservative lot of people in the world. Not in the political sense (they're mostly left-wing), but in resistance to change. They eventually forced the Dean to resign. He submitted his resignation the same week I arrived, and that left me hanging in the breeze, a creature that this Dean had brought in for a job the faculty was all against. That was an uncomfortable position. The Dean stayed on through the next academic year, because things move so slowly in academia that they didn't recruit a new Dean for another year. To find something for me to do, he said, “We have this continuing education unit in the College that's been

losing money, and we're going to fire its director. If you take over that unit and make it self-sufficient financially, then the faculty can't get rid of you." By that time I'd sold our house in Dallas, bought a new house in Norfolk, moved the family and all we owned, so there wasn't much choice but to make the best of it. I changed the existing continuing education unit into the Center for Global Business and Executive Education and tried to make a go of it. Eventually I was able to turn it around from a money-losing operation to profitability, mainly because I got a big contract with the Navy Exchange Service, headquartered in Virginia Beach, to do leadership training for their senior executives. I'd been doing leadership training in the Senior Seminar, so I had an appropriate background and credentials. This was a 1.6 million dollar contract over six years. Before that, this unit's highest gross was something like a hundred thousand dollars a year, and it was losing forty or fifty thousand. We went from that level to about a five hundred thousand dollar a year gross on which we were making a hundred thousand dollar profit. With that they couldn't fire me, and I stayed on there for seven years running this Center for Global Business and Executive Education. We provided all sorts of leadership and business-related training for both private and public sector customers, including the Navy. I was also doing a lot of international things, not in the university but in the community. I wrote for the local newspaper, gave talks on international affairs, and was active in the World Affairs Council. I also became a Senior Fellow at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, and helped with some of their training exercises and war games. But the ODU faculty never would let me participate in the academic side of the university. In seven years I was never once invited to visit a class, or make a talk. As a former Ambassador with lots of international experience, I felt I had something worthwhile to contribute, but they would not let me near the academic program.

Q: Well, it's a guild. I'm finding the same thing with this oral history program, obviously this is of great benefit to the academics, but almost, I haven't heard a word of encouragement.

BULLINGTON: Oh, they're not interested; they're just not interested.

Q: They'll be feeding off this for another couple of centuries, but...

BULLINGTON: To my astonishment, I discovered that even though this was the College of Business and Public Administration, most of the faculty didn't know much about the practical side of business or government. Their top priority and value was writing academic papers to be read by other professors. No businessman or government official in his right mind would waste time with such trivia. I decided that if this College were a business it would be bankrupt and if it were a government it would be overthrown. Yet it was a college of business and public administration, training people for practical work. Needless to say, I didn't get along very well with the faculty. I was glad to get out of there.

Q: Well, just a brief thing on the last part of your career. You'rdirecting Peace Corps in Niger? How did that come about?

BULLINGTON: After a few years of growth at the Center I was running, I was able to hire a deputy. He was a splendid salesman, did a great job, got new business, and we were growing even faster. But a student accused him of sexual harassment. I didn't know whether he was guilty or not. He made a strong case to me that he wasn't. For some reason the President of the University got involved. I told him 'If the guy's guilty, have a hearing, do whatever's necessary to demonstrate that, and fire him.' However, the President said 'No, sexual harassment is too hard to prove, and we can't fire him for that. We want you to fire him for incompetence.' I said 'He's not incompetent; he's done a great job.' I refused to do what the President asked. His response was 'Well, we'll fire you too.' And they did. Thus I was suddenly looking for a job. Peace Corps is something I had long thought about. I graduated from college in '62. That was the heyday of Peace Corps, which was created by President Kennedy in '61. I had decided to become a volunteer when I graduated, but to my surprise I passed the Foreign Service exam and became an FSO instead. As I was assessing job possibilities after being fired from the university, I recalled that the current Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, Chuck Baquet, had been one of my Senior Seminar students. After the Seminar he had become an Ambassador

and then was assigned as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. I contacted Chuck, and he encouraged me to apply for a Country Director position. I was able to get the job in spite of the fact that there is a great deal of suspicion of Foreign Service Officers (and particularly Ambassadors) on the part of most Peace Corps staff. They don't want anything hinting at a close connection between the Peace Corps and the State Department. But I was able to convince them, with Chuck's help, to give me the job of Country Director in Niger. I've been there for two years and I've enjoyed it immensely. I've done a lot of what I'd hoped to do at the university in terms of working with young people. It's been a great experience.

Q: What is the Peace Corps doing in Niger?

BULLINGTON: We have about a hundred volunteers now, and we're going to expand the program in consonance with the President's initiative to double the size of Peace Corps over the next five years. We're going to add a new sector and go up to about a hundred and thirty-five volunteers over the next two years. The volunteers currently are in agriculture, environmental protection, and public health, and we're going to add an education sector. They are some really outstanding young Americans, and I'm proud to be their leader.

Q: And how do you find your work with the Embassy?

BULLINGTON: There's no problem. Having had some experience in Embassies and having been an Ambassador, I feel pretty much at home, certainly not intimidated. After overcoming some initial suspicion by Peace Corps staff, I've had no problem with the cultural gap between the State Department and Peace Corps. In my view it's a hangover from the culture wars of the '60s and '70s, which should have been put aside long ago, but unfortunately has not been. I've done my best to bridge that gap, at least in Niger. I think I've been successful there, and maybe to a much smaller extent in Peace Corps generally. As far as I know, I'm the only former Ambassador ever to have served as a Country Director in Peace Corps.

Q: Well, great! Well, Jim, I guess this has come to an end. Thiis great. I thank you very much.

End of interview